PRESCRIPTIONS FOR PARISHES

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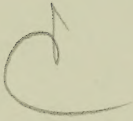
Foreword

PARISH RENEWAL. I have always been bewildered by that phrase because I do not know quite how it happens or how I can participate in making it happen. Yet I remain profoundly attracted to the idea because it sums up something of great value to me. I have been plugging away at trying to make sense of it for a long time—for 15 years as a parish minister, for a number of years before that as a layman, and for the past four years as a leader of an effort to do systematic learning about parishes and how they change.

The five people who wrote this book—Jim Fenhagen, Barry Evans, Jean Haldane, Jim Anderson, Nancy Geyer —have gathered more systematic information about congregations than any other group of colleagues I know of in the country or the world. *Prescriptions for Parishes,* pulled out of that rich experience and colored by their remarkably individual skills and insights, has proven to me that renewal cannot take place without a thorough understanding of *the state of health of the parish.*

Actually, this is a profoundly Biblical and theological book, for it is based in the conviction that the things of God are, indeed, incarnate in the transactions between God's people. Its concern is the same as that of the Apostles —to help people build congregations where there may be

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prayer and fellowship and the breaking of bread. It is concerned, further, to witness to the fact that the life of faith in Jesus Christ does, indeed, come into being in this world. Finally, and most important, to me at least, is the help it gives me to feel that I have contributions to make to the building of the Church of God—here and now.

I really do not know if parish renewal is going to happen. In some sense, I suppose that is up to God. But in the meantime, I know that I have no choice but to put whatever energies I have to work at the task. And I am deeply grateful to the two Jims, Barry, Jean, and Nancy for their vision, for their companionship in the task, for the clarity and helpfulness of this book, and for the encouragement of knowing that they are among the pioneers out there ahead of us. In this book they are marking the trail for us.

LOREN B. MEAD

January 11, 1973

Preface

DURING THE autumn of 1971, Jean Haldane, a consultant in parish development for the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, called together a group of people and asked them to pool their talent and experience in order to develop what might be called a "total response" to the educational needs of the parish. This group met for a year in what turned out to be an incredibly stimulating series of gatherings. As the conversations went deeper, the vision of the task became broader. There is no way to strengthen the educational program of a parish without looking at the parish as a whole. Everything in parish life educates—in either constructive or destructive ways. This was the fact that confronted us at every turn we took. It is the fact that gave rise to this book.

All of us who have had a part in developing this book have spent a great deal of time working either in or with the parish church. Jean Haldane, in her position with the Diocese of Washington, works professionally as a consultant to parishes, with a special emphasis on youth involvement. A pioneer in the use of nonverbal techniques in experiential education, she was formerly executive director of a nation-wide organization developing lay leadership for youth ministry in parishes. Jim Anderson is at present the Assistant to the Episcopal Bishop of Washington for Par-

ish Development. Prior to this he served in parishes in Virginia, Florida, and Wisconsin. He also works as an organization development consultant for the church and with government and industry. Nancy Geyer, of Baltimore, Maryland, works as a consultant in experiential education with a wide variety of groups and organizations. She is author-editor of experiential education programs for children, youth, and adults. Barry Evans, formerly of the parish of St. Stephen and the Incarnation in Washington, D.C., is a staff member of the College of Preachers, Washington Cathedral, and a consultant in liturgy and organization development. Jim Fenhagen is at present the rector of St. John's Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C., having formerly been the Director of Christian Education for the Episcopal Diocese of Washington. All are professional members of the Association for Creative Change (formerly ARABS). Celia Hahn, editorial consultant for this book, is a freelance writer and editor. It was out of a shared concern for the parish as a viable and developing institution that this book emerged.

Prescriptions for Parishes is intended as a resource for anyone—of any denomination—interested in the renewal of the parish. It can be used by vestries or parish councils, by Christian Education committees or planning committees. It would be our hope that consultants working with parishes might find this book something they might offer as a resource.

The idea of medical imagery seemed to emerge naturally as our work proceeded. It suggested to us the idea that a congregation, like a human body, is an organism made up of many interrelated parts. It suggested that when things go wrong—when the "body" is not working as efficiently as it might—there are steps we can take to make

things better. It also suggested that there were times when we needed to do more than take aspirin, times when it was necessary to call in the doctor.

When we talk about the parish, we are talking about the total organism, and we are speaking from the point of view of those who believe that if the organism is to be healthy and vital, all must have some share in deciding what goes on. We see openness between members as a value, and we are convinced that everything that goes on—every meeting, every service of worship, every encounter between young and old, every church school class or parish meeting—can make the difference between a parish that is alive and well and a parish that needs desperately to call for a physician.
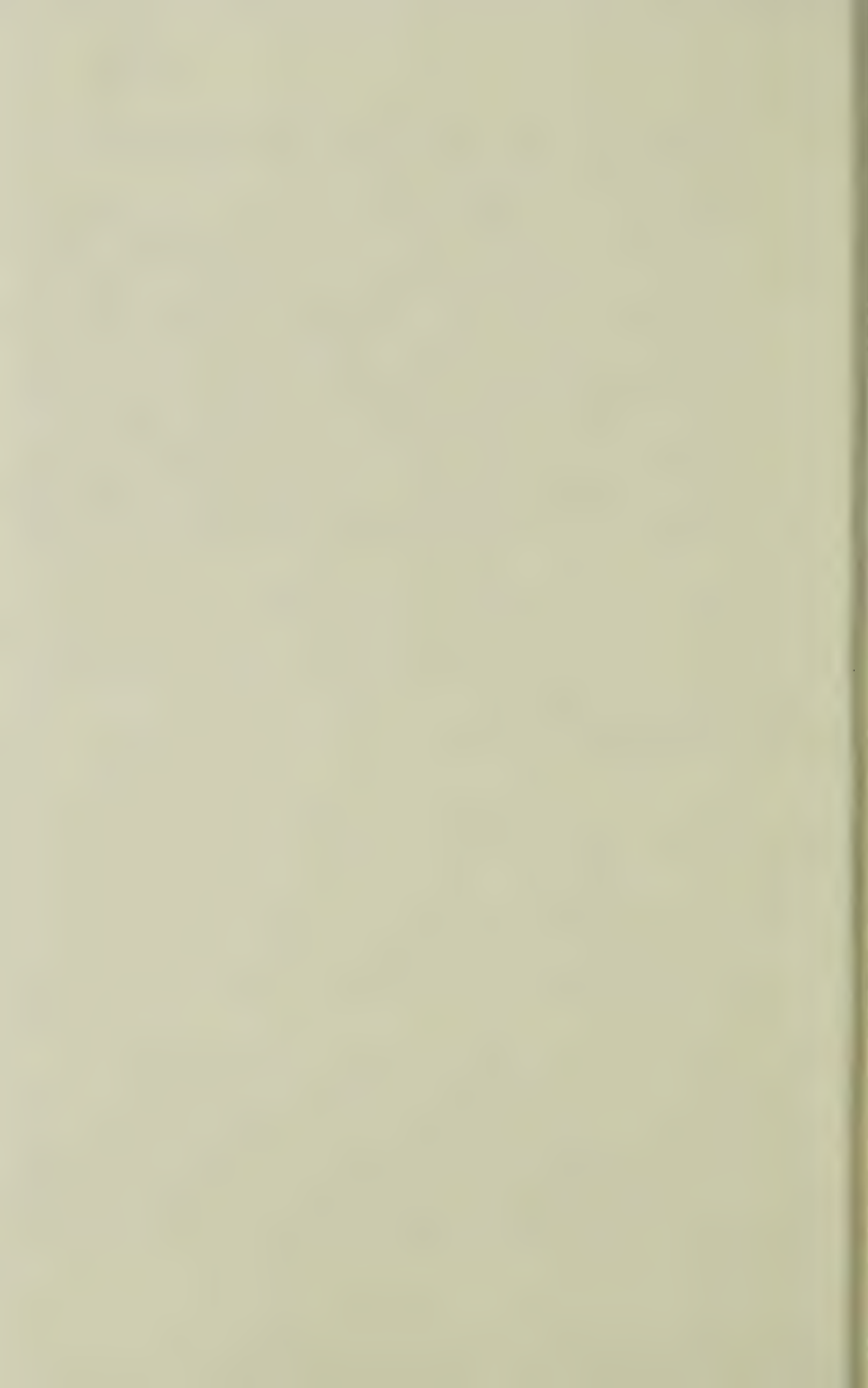
JEAN HALDANE   JIM ANDERSON
NANCY GEYER   BARRY EVANS
JIM FENHAGEN   CELIA HAHN, *editorial consultant*

Mount St. Alban
August, 1972

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Introduction

HAVE YOU had a complete physical lately? Maybe when you left the doctor's office you felt pleased and assured that you were in good shape, that everything was working well. Having checked out that slight overweight problem and those feelings of fatigue, you found that there were some things you had to take care of: better diet, more rest, exercise, and so on. On the other hand, the slight symptoms you noticed might have revealed an area where you have a need to work, test, and cooperate to get back to your normal good health. Rather more serious may be a problem calling for more lab work, more investigation, close watch by the doctor, or the possibility of surgery to bring you up to the normal state of health. (It is *your* normal state of health about which you and the doctor will be concerned.)

There are, of course, general rules of health and a great deal of knowledge about what constitutes health and sickness. What constitutes health for you is a unique balance of many interrelated and interdependent factors. Your anatomy is unique; so is the anatomy of a parish. The interrelatedness of its parts, its capacity for growth, change, adaptation, and decay are just as great as in the human body.

While there are general rules of health for the parish, each will have its own particular make-up and standards

and optimum conditions for growth. Of course, the body is not exactly a new image for the church. St. Paul, in trying to convey something of the new fellowship in Christ, talks about members one of another, fitly joined together. And describing the interdependence, Paul says: "The eye cannot say to the hand, I do not need you. . . ." If the finger is hurt, the whole body is hurt.

A checkup for the parish is a good idea now and then. It can affirm a healthy organism, pinpoint minor problems, help maintain good tone, and help spot symptoms of disease which may lead to serious ill health if ignored. So let's take a good look at the anatomy of a parish, and look, too, at some potions and remedies for any symptoms of illness.

JEAN M. HALDANE

PART I

ANATOMY OF A PARISH

CHAPTER 1

Uniqueness, or "There's Only One of You"

YOU DON'T need to be told that your parish is different. There will never be another parish just like yours. The particular configuration that makes up your parish can never be repeated. Yours is unique. Let us examine this uniqueness in terms of your history, your values and needs, and your home.

HISTORY

Like any other body, the parish doesn't come into being fully grown. It is born in a certain place at a certain time, and all of its distinct and different experiences are what make it unique. Its history, like that of an individual, leaves its mark on the body and exerts an influence on the kind of parish it is now.

Growth and change are as necessary and painful for the parish as for the human organism, and self-conscious directions and choices in its life are as clearly present.

More importantly, it is what the parish learns from its

experiences and how it utilizes its learnings that can mean the difference between life and death.

Let us look at some examples. One very familiar in recent years is that of an old city church—let us call it Christ Church—which now finds itself isolated in a downtown shopping area. A dwindling congregation of older people, now living far from the church, loyally travel to services each Sunday morning. The question is posed: "What can be the future of Christ Church?" Or even: "Is there a future for Christ Church?" Part of the answer lies in understanding its history, reflecting on its past experiences so that the present congregation can learn from these experiences and in the light of them be better able to make wise decisions now.

In its hundred-year history, this has been a large church, a large congregation with strong clergy leaders, several of whom were great preachers. The parish began with an emphasis on social work within the community and a social gospel to inform this work. People organized around this burning concern. Now the neighborhood has changed. The dynamic leadership is missing. Service to the community must take a different form if the church is to survive. Perhaps the present congregation will have strength to transform loyalty to a past glory into a service to the present reality.

Another congregation seeks to cope with its present sense of having become "established" after having started life in a storefront, where there was a creative young minister and where informality and experiment in worship informed the members' earliest sense of themselves as a church. Now in their not-so-new church building and with another, older, clergyman they have to reckon with the fact that they are not where they were six years ago.

How to institutionalize informality and experimentation? How to learn from their history yet grow and move in new directions? History reveals our strengths and weaknesses, gives us a sense of where we came from, and sometimes explains our hang-ups.

Another parish takes pride in its beautiful Gothic buildings. But in decision-making processes, the ghosts of old feuds and divisions arise that have their origins in the days of the planning of the building. At that time there were two sharply differing ideas of what the building should look like, coming out of differing sets of values. One idea prevailed, and many of those who thought they had lost left the church. Even now, some sixteen years later, people still talk with bitterness about the split. Perhaps the present practice of repressing differences of opinion has its roots in the fear of open division, of history repeating itself. It is hard to face that fear and look at its origins. There are powerful rewards or punishments that go with maintaining or breaking old standards. But, until these standards can be changed, the past dominates the present.

A small congregation, started in the middle 1950s, gets caught up in psychological counseling, small intensive group work. Its minister during this time is leading and encouraging this movement. The members of this congregation see themselves as innovative, experimental, and personal. Times and leadership change, as does some of the congregation. But the self-image remains static. In the late 1960s a new clergyman despairs of mobilizing this "innovative" and "experimental" and "personal" congregation. Much evaluation and consultative help over the next three years result in a new definition of the church's life, a new movement, and a fresh understanding of being

innovative *now,* experimental *now,* and personal *now.*

The history of any congregation is intimately bound up with the men it calls to be its pastors. In many ways and for many people, the clergyman embodies the congregation and symbolizes its character. Certainly he is the most important representative of the church to newcomers, who take their cue from him as to what they may expect and what may be expected of them. The process of the initial contract between clergyman and people—some of it spoken, some of it not—has a deep effect on the future life of a congregation. Any one congregation may look back on beloved clergymen, powerful clergymen, difficult clergymen; some with long ministries, some with short.

At the same time its people may look back on working with their clergymen, being told what to do by their clergymen, growing and learning from their clergymen, and even fighting their clergymen. Their life with one clergyman very much affects their choice of another and the future of that relationship. A beloved minister can affect the life of a congregation for years. Many will still be faithful to his vision and mindful of his teaching, and this can help them to welcome and love their next leader. Or, on the other hand, it can produce resentment of the next man who is "not like Mr. So-and-so."

A parish, like a person, is continually changing and growing. Yet a distinctive character is there even at times when there is confusion about what that character is. For in that history, from the earliest days to the present, many facets of its life have been developing. Let's look at those now.

<div align="right">J.M.H.</div>

VALUES

A value is something that is important to you. Let's go back to you, your body, and your health for a minute. Having good health is a value—something that is important to you. To be more specific, consider the case of Harry.

HARRY'S STORY: ACT ONE

For Harry a value is "keeping fit," staying in good shape. Today Harry has an appointment with his doctor for his annual physical checkup.

As he walks out of his house he glances at his watch and says to himself, "I'd better run or I'll miss my bus." He runs. He catches the bus, but for the first three minutes of the ride he sits there huffing and puffing before his breathing returns to normal. He thinks, "Golly, I'm getting out of shape."

During his checkup Harry says, "Doc, I'm a little worried that I'm not in as good shape as I'd like to be." He tells the doctor his experience with shortness of breath in running to catch the bus.

The doctor says, "How much physical exercise do you get these days, Harry?"

"Not much," he replies, "and I'm still smoking—only about three quarters of a pack a day though, Doc."

"Well, there's part of your answer, Harry. And you've put on ten pounds since you had your checkup last year, too."

"Okay, Doc," says Harry, "I'll try to stop smoking and

I'll join that health club near the office. I've been wanting to do that for some time."

"Here's a moderate diet I'd like you to try," concludes the doctor.

"That won't be easy for me, Doc, but it *is* important to me to get back in better shape. I want to be fit."

"Come back in six months and we'll see how you are doing," says the doctor.

"Okay, Doc. See you then," says Harry as he walks out of the doctor's office.

HARRY'S STORY: ACT TWO

Six months later Harry is back in the doctor's office. A check of his weight shows that Harry has lost seven pounds.

"Good," says the doctor, "try and keep them off."

"I will," says Harry.

"Run in place for me, Harry." Harry complies and is soon puffing and showing that he is still short of breath.

"Well, Doc," says Harry, "I haven't cut back on smoking or gotten any more exercise. I'm discouraged."

"Face it, Harry. You may say it's important for you to get back into better shape, but I think there must be other things that *really* are more important to you."

"Yes, Doc. My job is so demanding that I won't take time to go to the health club. And to relieve tension on the job, I smoke. I guess I say keeping fit and getting back into better shape is important, but actually doing my job well is my real value."

A parish has a set of values, too. Let's use an illustration of how a parish might look at one of its values.

Consider the case of Trinity. If you ask active members of Trinity, "What's your parish like?" their first response will probably be, "We're a warm and friendly congregation." If you then say, "Is being a warm and friendly congregation important to you?" the quick answer will be, "You *bet* it is. We're not cold like so many other churches."

Let's conclude that a *stated value* for Trinity is *to be a warm and friendly congregation.* So when the rector asks the vestry if he can appoint a small committee to look at how visitors and prospective new members are received at Trinity the vestry readily agrees. "We want visitors and prospective new members to feel welcome and at home," says one vestryman, and the others nod assent.

TRINITY'S STORY: ACT ONE

The rector, a vestry representative, two long-time members, and three new members are attending the committee meeting. The rector opens the meeting by saying, "It is important to us at Trinity to be a parish where visitors and prospective new members feel welcome. Our task as a committee is to look at what we are doing to enable this to happen." The resulting discussion shows that:

1) No one is really sure who are visitors on Sunday mornings.
2) The pew cards for visitors are infrequently used.
3) The rector seldom has time to call on persons who check the visitors' cards and say they would like a visit from him.
4) According to the new members' report, on their first visit no one spoke to them following the service

and they slipped out the side door and did not shake hands with the rector.

The committee members were very disturbed by these facts and said, "We've got to do something to offer more of a welcome to visitors." It was agreed that:

1) A "hospitality committee" would be recruited to be on duty before and after services to look for visitors and prospective members, invite them to the coffee hour, and introduce them to others.
2) The rector would try to call on all newcomers within two weeks after receiving their names from the pew cards or hospitality committee.

The committee agreed to meet one month later to report on what had happened. One comment at the end of the meeting was, "I feel better now because we're going to do something, and that's the kind of parish we are." Others agreed and went home feeling pretty good about their plans.

TRINITY'S STORY: ACT TWO

The rector reports that he has called on half those whose names he received, but that emergencies and regular parish responsibilities made it impossible for him to visit the others.

Members of the hospitality committee report that they were able to recruit only three people to serve with them. Although they telephoned many long-time active members

who attend services regularly, most of these people refused to serve for one or more of the following reasons:

1) "We need to be free to do things as a family right after church and don't want to be tied down to staying around for coffee hour."
2) "It's embarrassing to ask people if they are new members and find out that they are old members."
3) "I think the rector should announce in church that visitors are welcome and ask them to stop by the door to see him. He's really the one who is responsible for this."
4) "Everybody should be warm and friendly to visitors and prospective members. The rector should tell us all to do this."

The committee members discussed what they had learned and decided: We may see ourselves as a warm and friendly congregation; we may *say* that it is important to enable newcomers to feel comfortable and at ease, but our real values apparently are: 1) having our own freedom to do what we want; 2) having the rector take the responsibility for welcoming strangers; 3) the rector's other work takes priority over welcoming new people and calling on them.

A parish might take these six steps to check out its values. Such a design might look something like this:

(1) *State the value*

(2) *Look at the situation*
What do we actually do in relation to our stated value?

If there are dissatisfactions with (2) in relation to (1):

(3) *Make plans for changes* which will bring our situation (2) more in line with our stated value (1).

(4) Look at what actions resulted from our plans for change (3).

(5) Determine what are our actual *values* based on the changes we discovered in (4).

(6) *Our conclusion is:*
Our *stated* values are:

Our *lived out* values are:

_____   _____
_____   _____
_____   _____

The conclusions reached by the committee at Trinity may sound familiar. Often there are real differences between the stated values of a parish and the values actually being lived out in the ongoing life of the congregation. Becoming more aware of these differences may be an enlightening experience enabling a parish to have a more realistic view of its current state of health.

NANCY B. GEYER

NEEDS

Another dimension of the uniqueness of a parish may be seen by looking at how some basic needs are demonstrated in its life. Part of being human, both individually

and in groups, means sharing some basic common needs. Some of these needs are physical, like our need for nourishment and rest; some are psychological, such as our need to be loved and to love others; and some are spiritual, like a Christian's need to worship.

As human beings, there are several ways we can react to our needs. Here are some examples which focus on the basic physical needs of our bodies.

> Sam knows his body needs food, and he tries to eat properly. One day he's busy and skips lunch. Around five P.M. he develops a bad headache. "I bet I'm empty," he says. He eats. His headache disappears. After that Sam doesn't skip lunch.

> SAM — knew he had a need;
>   — when a problem developed, he related his problem to the proper need, and;
>   — dealt effectively with his problem.

> Jerry is different from Sam. He is so busy that most of the time he rushes through meals and swallows a couple of tablets for his frequent attacks of indigestion. It didn't surprise his colleagues when Jerry entered the hospital for surgery on an ulcer.

> JERRY — knew he had a need;
>   — knew he had a problem but ignored it;
>   — experienced the consequences of not dealing with his problem.

With Anne still another situation exists. Anne knows she has a need for a proper diet. She develops a problem of fatigue. She takes naps, goes to bed early, and takes a vacation, but she's still tired. When she finally goes to the doctor, he tells her she has an iron deficiency. Iron pills and a change of diet cure her fatigue.

ANNE — knew she had a need;
  — developed a problem and didn't connect it with her need;
  — chose ineffective solutions because she was not working on the right need;
  — sought outside help in defining her real need and her problem was dealt with effectively.

A final illustration is Mike, who knows that his body needs proper care. He always feels "OK" so he never goes to the doctor. Mike drops dead of a heart attack at 42.

MIKE — knew *theoretically* he had a need for proper bodily care and physical checkups, but;
  — he paid no attention to that need and suffered the consequences.

Dealing effectively with a problem involves understanding the need, and relating the solution to the need.

Let's take a look now at how needs may be seen and dealt with in parish life.

Take, for example, the need of individuals in a parish to be known by others and to know others. This need to know and be known may vary, depending on the person, all the way from just having people nod at you as you slip out of the eight o'clock service to being in a weekly prayer or study group where people may know each other very well. But for the sake of illustrating how the *need to be known* and *to know others* is evidenced, let us cite some examples:

AWARE OF PERSONAL NEED TO KNOW AND BE KNOWN	AWARE OF HOW PROBLEM IS RELATED TO NEED	PROBLEM DEALT WITH
I		
yes	*yes*	*yes*
The Browns, on their first Sunday back after summer vacation, are aware of some unfamiliar faces as they walk into the worship service.	Mr. Brown whispers to Mrs. Brown after church, "Let's introduce ourselves to a couple of people who don't look familiar and then stay for coffee hour today." She agrees.	They reach out to others, introducing themselves.
II		
yes	*yes* (but ignore relationship)	*no*
The Smiths have been coming to church for some time, but they feel a little hurt because the rector still doesn't seem to know who they are.	As usual, the Smiths slip out the side door, avoiding shaking hands with the rector and telling him their names again.	Next Sunday the Smiths have more resentment toward the rector as they listen to his sermon. "He's not as good a preacher as we thought," they say after they leave.
III		
yes	*no*	*no*
The Greens know a lot of people and enjoy seeing them every Sunday, but they are really disturbed because their	Their daughter reports that "the class is dull. We aren't learning anything." So the Greens keep complaining	What the Greens don't know is that their daughter is the only one from her school in the class, and because she is so quiet

IV

The Joneses theoretically see that most people who come to church have that need, but *they* come for worship, meditation, and an inspiring sermon. But lately the quality of the sermons is falling off; the new organist plays too loud and people talk when *they* want to meditate.

twelve-year-old daughter hates church school.

about the teachers and the curriculum to their friends.

in class discussions, the teacher has trouble remembering who she is.

no

"This church isn't for us. These people aren't really here to worship God," the Joneses say.

no

yes

When the church school superintendent, in response to the Greens' *request* for help, discovers what the real need is, steps are taken to help meet the daughter's need to know others in her class and be known by her teacher and classmates.

no

They leave. (This is the fourth parish they've left for the same reason in the last four years.)

Persons sharing some basic common needs are a reality in parish life. What is important is both how conscious people are of their own needs and the needs of others, and how well they deal with the problems which develop when there are some unmet basic needs.

A significant indication of the state of health of a congregation may be found in the answer to the question: How appropriately does our parish respond to the common basic needs of its members?

N.B.G.

YOUR HOME

We all know how important our surroundings are to our sense of well-being. We talk about light, airy rooms, pleasing colors, and comfortable furniture. The kind of surroundings we want depends on our style of life. Let us consider some aspects of our own homes and look at the similarities and differences in our parish homes.

Some people are lucky enough to build their own dream house, planning it to fit their style of life, the values they hold, and the needs they want to meet. This would seem to be the best way of getting what you want. Sometimes it works that way, but it isn't always easy! For one thing, it is very difficult to make plans that will fit the needs of everybody in the family. And sometimes we are not as clear about who we are as we would like to be. And, lastly, by the time the house gets built, we may feel differently about parts of it. But the house will certainly say a lot about the people who live in it, and for them it may feel like "home."

Similarly, the new little community church setting out

to build its home is totally absorbed in its plans, raising the money, deciding just what its members want to develop. It will be very important to have a certain location, to have the building say something to the passersby as well as to present and potential members. When built, some of it will be exactly right; not all of it will please everyone, but it will say something important about the people who live and worship there, and it will attract others who are looking for a similar life-style.

And for those of us who live in houses that other people have occupied, how do we feel about them? Do you remember that feeling of strangeness when you were inspecting a prospective home, and saying things like: "We could make this room into a den," or "I'd want some shelves here," or "Of course, we'd want a different wall color in here," and "What on earth did they use this area for?" We were already making it our home; and some parts of it seemed to fit well, while other parts seemed as if they might never be right. Our final decision rested on all sorts of tangible and intangible things: location, size, convenience, price, the view from the kitchen, the afternoon sun in the living room, and whether it "feels just like us" or "it will do for now."

Shopping for a church is something like shopping for an individual home. We look for a physical setting that will meet our needs. The building itself tells us a lot about the church, about the people who "live" there, and about the God they worship and the way in which they worship Him.

Let's look at some comments representing different spiritual aspirations and how people see these embodied in bricks and stones.

Jim says, "The cathedral is so majestic. I love the dignity of the service, the beauty of the music, the drama of

the whole thing. It's awe-inspiring. It reminds me of the glory of God—that He is high and lifted up.''

Mary says, ''My church is still what you might call 'the little church around the corner.' It has atmosphere. I feel I can be quiet there. The worship is traditional but I really get a sense of God's presence.''

Joe says, ''Our building is not much to look at—simple, unpretentious—but we're a great group—informal. Our worship is fun. We're willing to try something new. We try to make allowances for different understandings of God.''

Ruth says, ''It's that big, old red brick on the corner. If you get lost, anyone will tell you where the church is. There's something going on there all the time. We have worship around 10 A.M.—all the kids are there. I guess you'd say we see God as someone who cares for *all* people whether they're in church or not.''

The importance of the locus—the place—cannot be overestimated. It has a lot to do with the health of the parish body, sometimes in very direct ways, as in the maintenance of the building. The standard of cleanliness varies from one church to another, just as it does from one home to another—and the toleration for general untidiness will be high in one church and low in another. In one parish there will be a demand for repairs to be done promptly, for painting on a regular basis; in another there may be almost a satisfaction in grumbling about how ''this window has been broken,'' or ''this door has been off its hinges for more than a month.'' History, values, and needs are exposed in the maintenance of the building. In one parish the adults may be saying, ''We like our new parish hall— clean, efficient, labor-saving. We know the value of money

and we've worked hard and want to invest in something that reflects our standard of living and provides space for the education of our children in the Christian tradition." But the young people are saying, "We like the old parish house with the paint peeling off the walls. We've always lived with gleaming aluminum—money isn't that important to us. The old building feels cozy—we need to talk, to find out who we are."

Structural changes—large or small—are very significant to the majority of the parish. The mention of a new wing immediately raises questions about the life that will go on in the new wing. People are saying in effect, "What will be emphasized, and at the expense of what? What will be new, and will I like it?" Unless all these questions are raised and a collaborative attempt made at defining the needs we want to meet and the values we want to express, the new wing can be a source of conflict. And if this conflict is unresolved it can infect the future of the parish body.

The worship space in particular raises many issues when there is a suggestion of replacing the pews with chairs, altering the sacristy, shifting the altar, or buying new kneelers. Here the individual needs of the congregation as well as its collective needs are voiced.

Let us listen in on a discussion of the worship committee at St. James'. Its members are considering the suggestion that in their long, narrow church a table be set up in front of the chancel steps to be used as an altar for the 9:15 Family Service or Holy Communion instead of the one at the far east end of the church. It has been tried this last Sunday for the first time.

RECTOR: "I felt better being nearer to the people. With a free-standing table I could see their faces and they could see mine."

NANCY (mother of two young children): "I felt more of a family. The children are interested, now that they can see."

TED: "But it seems so busy now. I felt I didn't have a moment to myself. I was so aware of what you (the rector) were doing. And I missed the view of the altar—it was very restful."

JOHN: "I think you can overdo the togetherness bit. We've never been that kind of church. I like a little space between myself and the next person."

NANCY: "But we've only changed one thing, the table! You can sit further away if you want to."

JOHN: "I know I can—but it changes everything!"

And John is right, it does change everything. It may be a good change for the whole church, but he feels strongly about the change because it touches some of his needs in worship. He needs some space around him to allow himself to concentrate on the words, the prayers, and the sermon. Up to now he has had these needs met and fears this is the end. So he appeals to history and his understanding about the basic character of the parish.

Nancy feels strongly in favor of the experiment because her real need is to involve her children so that she and they can find something significant in the worship. She can-

not have distance from them even if she wanted it! And the rector is an important person for her children to see.

Ted doesn't really want to see what the clergyman is doing. His need is for a sense of mystery and of viewing the mystery from afar.

The rector has a need to be in closer touch with his people, and the "family meal" atmosphere that is created helps him in this way.

What St. James's will do is not clear at this point, but what is clear is that it will be *no small matter* to "change only one thing."

The way in which the clergyman uses the physical structure makes a difference. A woman in one parish remarked that each of its successive clergymen had changed the color scheme of the parish offices. Obviously, each one was saying, "This is my home now."

In one church, somber lighting and heavy pews are the right setting for the strong presence and oratory of the minister. In another church, the long nave presents acoustical difficulties for the present rector and so a new loudspeaker system is installed, which changes the style of the worship. A minister strong in his work with young people and impatient of those who cling to tradition at the expense of growth ignores some of the refinements of ceremony and does not use some of the vessels and furniture of the church. For example, when he preaches, he stands down at the level of the people and the pulpit becomes almost obsolete. This changes the spatial relationship of the furniture and the focus of the worshipers.

The church building, parish house, grounds, and any other property owned by the church tell us who we are. As we learn more about the effect of environment upon individuals and groups, we come to understand that the

strength of their feelings about the physical parish setting are not only *not* surprising but very normal. The parish home will be as unique as the parish itself, for it is the outward and visible expression of who the people are, where they have come from, and where they are going.

J.M.H.

Communications
and
Decision-making

STILL ANOTHER way of describing the anatomy of a person or of a parish is to examine the state of communications and decision-making.

There are two important aspects of communication. Both *what* is communicated and *how* communication takes place are significant.

What in communications is the content or the message. For instance, the items in St. George's parish bulletin give a weekly review of the programs and activities of the parish. *What* the bulletin presents—the Bible study group, the parish supper, the annual bazaar—indicates one major answer to what St. George's parish is like.

How refers to the processes of communication. There are a variety of possibilities for how communication takes place in a parish. One example of a frequently used communication process at St. George's is having the rector make announcements during the Sunday services. Parish groups often decide that the rector urging parishioners to attend their programs is a key factor in achieving good participa-

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tion. At times the rector has asked lay persons to make these announcements, but usually they refuse, saying, "The congregation will respond better if you tell them."

Both *what* messages will be communicated and *how* the communication processes will function in a parish require decision-making. Because how decisions are made and communicated is a key to understanding how a parish operates, we will examine the communications processes in relation to decision-making in a congregation.

First, let's focus on some of the content (what) and the processes (how) of communication involved in our own physical functioning, and compare these with the way communications function in a parish.

The communications processes of the human body function on an automatic level of which we are not consciously aware. When you decide to walk across the room, the simple "what" of the message, "walk across the room," is quickly relayed to all necessary muscles and you move, quite unconscious of the communication processes which are taking place throughout your system. In the same way, in your parish a message with simple content may entail significant communications processes of which you are not consciously aware.

For example, you are attending the eleven o'clock worship service in your parish. It is the first Sunday on which a revised service for the celebration of the Holy Communion has been used. The rector gives appropriate step-by-step instructions: "Please stand and turn to page 67 of the Green Book* . . ." "Please turn to the middle of

* The Episcopal "Services for Trial Use," commonly called "The Green Book."

page 107 of the Green Book . . ." "Please kneel." "Please turn to page two on the printed Order of Service." "Please stand to sing Hymn 678." *What* is being stated in each communication is a simple, clear, direct message. However, as you follow each instruction—listening, reading, speaking, singing—you are experiencing a wide variety of feelings, sensations, and reactions. Multiply your experience by the number of persons present, including the clergy, and you will have an indication of the interwoven complexity of unshared communication processes taking place beneath the simple content of what is being said during the service itself.

Our bodies have another type of communication process which we may not be aware of at times. Without a person realizing it, for example, one of his eyes may communicate the message to his brain that it is strained, overworked, and not functioning at full capacity. The communication processes of the body may automatically compensate for a weakness which has not been articulated or even sensed by the persons involved.

Look at a simple practice of the vestry at St. Stephen's. New vestrymen there realize that they are responsible for parish finances. It comes as an unhappy surprise to most new vestrymen at St. Stephen's, however, when at their first vestry meeting in January, each is handed a stack of cards containing the names of persons who did not pledge during the annual canvass the preceding November. The new vestrymen are told they are to make personal calls to ask each of these persons to make a pledge to the parish. This simple communication has been going on year after year without challenge. Neither new vestrymen nor old question what this action communicates to them and the

parish about how they see their leadership role and how they view the responsibility of parish membership for pledging and financial support of congregational life.

Many times the messages conveyed through our physical communication processes are clear and pointed. Thirst, hunger, and fatigue are everyday examples. In addition to these body messages, any ache or pain, while we are not always sure of its source or cause, does sound the alarm and throw us into deciding what response to make.

In parish life, too, there are the everyday messages that are open, direct and, therefore, ask for a response. Sometimes the message sender simply wants information. The rector's wife is in the midst of her dinner preparations on Saturday night. The telephone rings. "Is there care for infants during your eleven A.M. service?" inquires the voice at the other end of the line. Other times the messages begin, "I wish we had so-and-so or such-and-such here at Emmanuel." Direct communications in that form are heard almost as often as there are people who have been in a parish church for more than two or three years of their lives! This type of communication may come wrapped in other packages, beginning "I don't like" or "I don't want" this or that here at Emmanuel. Behind both forms there is the same basic message: "Do something differently; make a change."

Once the message has been stated, there is no choice whether or not to respond. No response is a response. Often there is a planned response, however. A planned response means making a decision and taking action. When you experience hunger pangs or burn your finger, you decide and act. In the same way, when the "wishes" and "complaints" fill the airwaves in the parish, there are decisions and actions in response. A message, a *what,* is communi-

cated, and a process of communication, a *how,* is utilized.

Let's examine three ways in which decision-making and communication take place in parishes.

One way is *No Response,* or "The Silent Model." To illustrate this let's look at St. Anne's where, after the junior-high weekend conference at a nearby retreat center, a number of parents of the young people who attended were complaining to each other and to other members of the parish. Their complaint was that the adult leader at the conference allowed some seventh and eighth graders to buy cigarettes from a machine at the conference center. This information was reported to them by their children. Eventually, reports of these complaints reached the parish staff. Since the parish staff had not been directly approached by any parents, they decided to make no response and took no action.

A second model for decision-making and communication is *Committee Action,* or the "We'd-rather-do-it-our-selves-Father" model. We can see this model in action at St. Mark's.

The vestry agrees that some long-range parish planning is needed, and appoints a representative group of parishioners to serve as a parish planning committee. The vestry charges the planning committee to find out from members of the congregation what they would like to see happen at St. Mark's in the next five years. For three months the planning committee works hard to gather information. Committee members visit parish organizations asking for ideas and announcing during the services that everyone is invited to fill out suggestion cards which have been placed in the pews. The planning committee's efforts produce responses from only about ten percent of the members. The committee discusses whether or not to

make further attempts to gather information, such as conducting telephone interviews or mailing a survey form to everyone in the parish. During the discussion these comments are made:

— We gave everyone a chance to respond. They didn't—so they'll just have to live with what we decide.
— If they cared about it they would have responded. There's no use asking them again; we won't get any better response.
— The more people who respond, the more different ideas we'll get, and the harder it will be to satisfy everybody.
— We do have *some* information from them, and we know what we think. Planning's our job as a committee. Let's get to work.
— We are a representative group and really know what most people want anyway.
— We've got a big job to do and we've already spent a lot of time. It's too complicated to get more information. Let's get on with it.

Planning committee decision: Inform the congregation what the committee has done to get information and announce that the planning committee will now do the planning.

A third way of communicating and making decisions is *Congregational Action,* or the "We-are-one-in-the-Spirit" model. Here's an example from St. Paul's:

At the March vestry meeting Mr. Jones, the rector, says, "I'd like us to determine how the dates and times for the summer Sunday schedule will be set. For the last two

years there have been suggestions for changes and I'd like to have the parish consider doing something different."

"Fine," says Harold Painter. "I'd like to see the summer schedule begin Memorial Day weekend and end about the third weekend in September."

"Hold it, Harold," says the rector, "I guess I didn't make myself clear to you. I asked for a vestry decision on *how* to set the summer schedule, not what changes, if any, to make. First, are you willing, as a vestry, to make a decision on *how* changes in the summer schedule will be determined?"

"Yes," they all reply. The outcome of their discussion is the following plan:

Two vestry members will prepare a brief check-list questionnaire for the congregation and bring a draft to the next vestry meeting. The final form of the questionnaire will be mailed with the parish bulletin; and when the results are compiled, a report of the dates and times receiving the majority of votes will be made to the congregation. The congregation will make the decisions on dates and times for the summer schedule. As is the custom in the parish, this plan, along with all other vestry decisions that evening, will be mailed to the congregation with the bulletin the following week.

Behind the use of this approach in a parish lies the belief that the leadership role of clergy and vestry is to facilitate the parish as a whole in determining its destiny and development. Further, the work of the Spirit, through the desires, aspirations and ideas of all members, is seen as a necessary resource for maintaining open communication and making the most effective decisions for the work and life of that congregation. From a communications viewpoint, the *what* and *how* of the above vestry action

are congruent with the beliefs underlying their style of congregational action.

Whatever the processes and the messages, decision-making and communications in a parish tell a great deal about the state of health of that parish.

<div align="right">N.B.G.</div>

CHAPTER
3

Interrelated Parts

ANOTHER ASPECT of the anatomy of a parish is the interrelatedness and the interdependency of the parts that make up the whole. Just as I talk about my body and know that it is made up of many parts, from the miniscule cells to the arms and legs, so we talk about our parish and know that it is made up of all the members as well as the larger segments such as vestry and committees, youth group, and church school. Someone has described an organization, or a parish, as being like a mobile, with all the parts delicately balanced and moving together. Touch one part and it affects the whole. A parish is an enormously complex set of relationships and interrelated parts that are continually adjusting and readjusting as they interact with each other.

Even the Sunday morning schedule symbolizes the deep interrelatedness, as many parts of parish life are brought into play within a fixed-time framework. A young acolyte, who is stopped as he flees out of the sacristy and told to put his robes away, is then late for his junior-high class. He feels the pinch of the interrelated parts.

There are obviously more serious consequences of inter-

relatedness for both parts and people. Let us look at some examples. At St. Dunstan's, the church school is in bad shape. Numbers have fallen off in the past year, and an effort to recruit teachers during the summer produced very few adults willing to take on the job. If we could have a bird's eye view of St. Dunstan's on a Sunday morning in October, we would see how much the hurting church school program affects many parts of the church. For one thing the congregation is smaller. One or two families now go to another church which has a thriving educational program for children. At coffee time some of the parents talk to each other angrily about the situation. Their children have declared that they are bored. The teachers don't stay for coffee now. They respond defensively to questions about the curriculum. The junior choir is attempting to continue in spite of being short three people who had been recruited from the church school. Not everyone hurts in the same degree, but many people not directly involved in that segment of parish life feel its troubles and are affected by them. If we say, "When the foot is hurt, the whole body is hurt," we do not mean that every other part of the body hurts in the same way as the foot, but that there is a sympathetic response in other areas. So it is in the parish.

Let us look at a positive example of this interrelatedness in the parish. Let us take the case of the new committee at Resurrection. The new committee's task is to formulate goals for the adult education program. The expectation is for a new program; but the new committee is already affecting other parts of the whole parish. For one thing, the chairman, little known in the congregation before now, emerges as a new leader, and as the committee members come to recognize this and trust him, his influence begins

to be felt in other areas of the parish. As the committee nears the end of its work, he is approached for nomination to the vestry. A young woman on the committee is stimulated to look into what the parish is offering her children in education, and this prompts her to become concerned about the educational needs of adult teachers. The rector has a new leadership group to work with, and the adults of the parish, after a year of being consulted about their wishes and needs, have slowly but surely become more aware, more open, and more active in the general work of the parish. The adult education committee is *very much affecting several parts of the parish.*

Another example demonstrates the consequences of emphasizing strengths in some parts of the parish life at the expense of other parts that need taking care of. A large church, known for its strong work in the area of ministry to young people and community action, has a staff of three clergymen, two of whom have these two areas as their special concerns. They are talented men, and so the youth program includes a free clinic, job-finding workshops, and a creative arts program; and the community action program sponsors hot meals for the elderly and a very active housing committee. The emphasis on these two areas has a variety of effects on some of the other parts of the parish. Parents of teenagers are pleased that there is a serious attempt to work with youth. Some other adults feel neglected and old in what seems to them a parish predominantly for young people. A mother of young children would like more emphasis on the children's educational program and better nursery facilities. "Charity begins at home," she feels. Newcomers find it hard to get in unless they become volunteers in either the youth or community programs. When the budget is made up, the two programs

get large slices to continue flourishing work. There's not much left for other adult programs, and the nursery facilities remain understaffed and poorly supplied.

There is no moral to this story! It is *not* a judgment on the strong youth and social work, but simply a demonstration of the effect of these emphases upon other parts of the parish.

Obviously there is a difference in *degree* when we are talking about one part of the parish body affecting other parts. A breakdown in the central nervous system can cause total paralysis. This would be equivalent to the management group of the parish vestry or church council and the clergy being completely at loggerheads, and paralyzing effective movements in many other parts of the parish.

The issue for the vestry and clergy at St. Thomas's is a confusion about the role of the vestry, and the difficulty all hangs upon the expectations clergy and laity have of each other. The majority of the vestry see themselves as a board of directors deferring to the judgment of the chairman, the rector. They want to be supportive to him, but in matters other than building and finance they feel he should make the decisions. The rector, while not openly agreeing with them, rewards this attitude with silent nods and becomes very anxious when talk is initiated about worship or the shape of Sunday morning or Christian education.

The minority on the vestry feel differently. They see the vestry as the management group in the parish, and they feel that every area of parish life is their concern. They expect to share the responsibility and authority for decisions. When they talk about their view of their role, they sound like a dissident group. The vestry continually

walk up to the brink of this problem but back away again. The result is that everyone feels exhausted, decisions are hard to make and rarely carry any real commitment beyond a few members of the vestry. The tasks that subgroups undertake are unclear in scope and responsibility, so that many of their reports are severely criticized or simply "received."

The effect on many parts of the parish is heard in such comments as: "What's the use? No one ever supports us." "The rector won't do this or that." In effect, there is considerable paralysis in many parts of the parish because of the centrality of this leadership group, and in particular because of the crucial role of the clergyman and his style of leadership.

Sometimes a seemingly small part of parish life can have enormous implications for other parts of the parish, if a central concern like worship is being dealt with. In one parish, the new worship committee is attempting in a responsible way to assess the worship needs of the congregation and to find ways of enriching that experience. The two methods decided upon for sensing the needs are: (1) to ask for information from the 9:15 congregation about their present level of satisfaction; and (2) to introduce new services for trial use as a means of testing needs and preferences. The worship commission, which includes the rector, the assistant, and an outside consultant, is very anxious about both strategies, and action is delayed for several weeks. The first foray into the congregation is at the adult class, consisting mostly of 9:15 people. The committee presents its understanding of the task and poses the question, "What concerns do you have about worship?" Committee members are both excited and pleased about the readiness of people to respond. The comments, both

positive and negative, range all over the board, and a couple of people are rather angry.

Next, the book of new services for trial use is introduced. This time the committee is unnerved by the strength of responses to their questions. There is so much feeling, again positive and negative. Committee members say to each other, "If these are the 9:15s, what will the 11:00s be like?" The worship committee is a small group, but its area of responsibility affects almost all of the parish body. No part is immune to feeling where worship is concerned. This is an instance of one part being crucial to the well-being of the whole body.

But what effect would there be, for example, from the nonfunctioning of a youth program upon a parish composed largely of people over fifty? It distresses some people from the points of view of parish values and of the four or five young people who are members of the church, and a committee is set up to create some program for meeting the needs of the four or five. But all this happens amidst the largely undisturbed other parts of the parish. It's like an otherwise healthy, functioning person breaking a wrist; though it is painful and may take a while to heal, he can get along and continue life in a fairly normal way. The degree of effect is much less than that caused by St. Thomas's vestry or the worship commission.

The parts of a parish are not only interrelated, but also interdependent. In order for me, as a person, to move at all, muscles, nerves, and brain have to collaborate and each do their part. They do not all do the same thing. On the contrary, each has its own function and there is countermovement, countertension to make it possible. So it is in a parish. Let us look at an example of what happens when people do not understand this.

A new church school committee works hard to set ob-
jectives for the next year and plan a program that really
excites the members. They work very much on their own,
impatient to do something really new. This new program
involves changes of time, shorter units of work, longer
periods of task time, a thematic approach, and greater
support for the teachers. It feels good until they begin to
put it into practice. Some of the teachers who were not
involved do not seem to pick up on the idea and seem
very insecure with a theme. Some parents do not want to
wait around for their children and object to the longer
class time. The minister points out that on the second and
third Sundays, it really won't work. The committee realizes
that in order for a major movement to be made, the collab-
oration of many others in the parish is needed. Everyone
concerned needs to get the message and claim participation
in the project. The church school committee learns the
hard way that the effectiveness of its plans depends upon
the cooperation of many other parts of the parish.

In another parish, the clergyman is very much aware of
the necessity for all related parts to work—each in its own
way—for an important movement to be made. There is a
momentous decision by the Christian education com-
mittee, which he has assisted in all of its deliberations, to
center the education program upon a dramatic production
in which adults, youth, and children will take part. He
helps others to look for ways to participate. The whole
parish must mobilize for the production to be successful.
Each segment—church school, youth, adult forum (where
education has been presented in fairly traditional ways)—
must have time to sit down and hear as accurately as pos-
sible what is proposed, ask questions, express doubts and
enthusiasm, and begin to see and plan its way to par-

ticipate and to be led to resources for its job. The rector is a key person in an undertaking of this sort. He counters objections from people who feel it isn't proper to have drama in the church. He lets them express their discomfort and offer their ideas about directions they see as necessary for the parish to move. He encourages many kinds of participation—acting in the production, building the platform in the chancel, making the costumes, making refreshments for the actors as they rehearse. The musicians of the parish are consulted and brought in to participate. There are moments of anguish along the way, but the parish is in it together as workers approach the date of the performance. A large vision has become a highly collaborative educational project and St. Paul's image of the church body "fitly joined together" becomes more of a reality for people.

It is easier to become aware of the psychosomatic factors in a human being than of those in a parish. For example, I know that the annual appraisal in my job is due. I feel anxious about it. I become aware of stiffness and tension in my neck and shoulder muscles. Now I feel worried about the tension in my neck and shoulders, so my anxiety is increased. I am now anxious both about the appraisal and the shoulder. We are familiar with the bind caused by the circular process of the psychosomatic illness. There are two ways to deal with it: (1) I can face the primary anxiety about the appraisal. For example, I might prepare for the appraisal by talking it over with someone, making notes about the points I want to raise, being clear about what I have done in my job and what I have contributed to the people I work with. In other words, I may be able to reduce the anxiety, which in turn would reduce the physical tension. (2) I can treat the neck tension with a muscle re-

laxer and so reduce the anxiety about my physical tension which, in turn, will mean less overall anxiety so that I may cope with the appraisal in a calmer way.

Now let us look at the parish scene. We, an imaginary church council, know that the two-hundred-strong community youth center in the basement is having a dance on Saturday, complete with rock band. We are anxious about it. We become aware of parents' tension about availability of drugs. Older parishioners are telephoning the rector inquiring about supervision, and the janitor has said that he can't be responsible if "they break up the place." We know that it is important to reach out to young people in the community. We feel anxious about the parish tension. At the potluck supper two days before the dance, we are more uptight when we hear people saying "We ought to call it off."

So we are carrying two loads of anxiety: (1) about the dance itself and (2) about the tension which arises at the prospect of the dance. There are two ways to deal with the problem: (1) we can deal with the cause of the anxiety, the dance. We can try to take concrete security measures to be ready for any eventuality, provide help for the janitor and yet allow the dance to go ahead; or (2) we can decide to let the dance happen and deal with the anxiety about it, to discuss with each other what are our real fears and what are fantasies. We may ask the question of one another, "What is the worst that can happen?" or "What are we really afraid of?" And, having faced our tensions about the dance, possibly we can reduce them and be willing to live with the consequences of the dance whatever they may be.

Thus the parish experiences anxieties and tensions. Sometimes we can clearly identify the problem causing

the anxiety and can see the options open to us in dealing both with the problem and/or the tensions arising from it. But there are other times when we cannot or will not see the connections and are distressed about both the problem and the anxiety. Then we are very aware of being "members one of another" and related to one another, joyfully, if somewhat uncomfortably!

J.M.H.

CHAPTER
4

Conducting a
Checkup
in Your Parish

AFTER READING Part One, "The Anatomy of a Parish," a group in your parish might want to determine their own answers to the question, "How do we see the state of health of our parish at the present time?"

One way to do this would be to use a rating scale for each of the six areas covered in Part One. Before using the scale, your group might spend some time discussing each area as presented in Part One, then each person could give each area a numerical score for parish health.

A rating of $4 =$ excellent health; this area needs no attention.

$3 =$ good health, could stand a little further checking out.

$2 =$ needs further attention.

$1 =$ an area of distress.

$0 =$ major treatment needed quickly.

Using this chart your group could get a sense of how you view your parish's present state of health:

AREA	INDIVIDUAL RATINGS	TOTAL OF INDIVIDUAL RATINGS	GROUP AVERAGE SCORE
History			
Values			
Needs			
Your Home			
Communication and Decision-making			
Interrelated Parts			

Group Average Rating for All Six Areas _____

Once the chart is completed, group discussion might focus on individuals sharing their reasons for their ratings, and on your responses to the group average scores.

N.B.G.

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PART II

POTIONS AND REMEDIES

Diagnosis

AT SEVERAL points in this book, mention is made of the process of diagnosis—the process of finding the problem. In particular, the sections, "Conducting a Check-Up in Your Parish" and "Data Gathering" directly relate to diagnosis. Without proper diagnosis this book will be of little help to you. Diagnosis is the *single most important* aspect of the overall process of movement toward parish health.

Prescriptions for even the most powerful and effective medicines are useless, or worse, dangerous unless accurate diagnosis has been made. Fortunately, reasonably accurate diagnosis of parish problems is a skill which can be learned. However, it is difficult to learn a skill from reading a book. Books about cabinet-making, tennis-playing, or chess-playing can be helpful in learning these skills, but they can never substitute for coaching or apprenticing, or for actually practicing the skill. You should not expect to become proficient at finding the real causes of a parish dilemma without similar work toward acquiring this skill. With this proviso, here are some practical guidelines which, if followed closely, can be of assistance in this diagnostic process:

1. Diagnosis has to do with establishing cause. It is some-

times called "finding the problem." You only have a prob-
lem when appropriate persons recognize that there is a gap
between what is and what ought to be. Often parish prob-
lems go unnoticed because they are not recognized as such
by the appropriate people, or because what ought to be
has never been defined. You may feel the parish has a
preaching problem because the rector preaches so often on
social issues. The rector may not share your thought that
there is a problem—either because he does not share the
same information you have about the congregational at-
titude toward his preaching style or because he does not
share the same standard you have about what the impact
of a sermon *ought* to be. To locate a problem you must
have information about what is happening and what you
want to have happen, and that information must be in the
hands of the appropriate people.

If you are having difficulty finding the problem, ask:
   a) Can I accurately describe what is presently hap-
      pening?
   b) Do I know what it is I want to have happen?
   c) Is this information shared with and agreed upon by
      the other people in a position to do something
      about the problem?

2. The symptoms of several problems are often lumped
together into one large common category. It is not unusual
to hear people speak of the Christian education problem,
the church school problem, the evangelism problem, the
problem with conflict, etc. This is one of the most grievous
diagnostic errors. All you have from mixing several prob-
lems together under one label is a mess. This leads to try-
ing to find one solution for the church school problem
when the church school mess is in reality several problems.

You will use up your energy in a search for a solution you will never find. Clustering several problems together is going in the wrong direction. The process of problem finding is a call to be more and more specific rather than generalizing related symptoms.

Before you ever begin thinking about solutions, go through these four steps:

▶ *One*

List specific factors describing the way things ought to be.

▶ *Two*

List specific factors describing the way things are now.

List specific factors describing the way things ought to be.

List specific factors describing the way things are now.	List specific factors describing the way things ought to be.
▶ *Three* List as many specific forces and factors as you can which are getting in the way of movement toward the way things ought to be.	

List specific factors describing the way things are now.	List specific factors describing the way things ought to be.
▶ *Four* List as many specific forces and factors as you can which are promoting movement toward the way things ought to be.	List as many specific forces and factors as you can which are getting in the way of movement toward the way things ought to be.

You now have a picture of the many factors, separate and different but interrelated, which go to constitute the mess you are trying to solve. Now you can direct your efforts toward removing as many of the intervening causes as possible and increasing, where possible, the positive elements in the picture.

3. Many individuals and groups confuse decision making and problem solving. This confusion is expressed by the phrase "creative problem solving." Most creative problem solving is actually a way of generating a number of alternatives for action. Brainstorming is a common example. You are committing this error each time you move directly from an undefined mess or situation to talk of probable solutions. You have not found the problem until you can say, "I believe this is the cause—here is the element in our situation which is responsible for the deviations we have noted." Only when the cause is established are you ready to take action.

4. The church is made up of people doing things with and for other people. A great many of the messes we get into turn out to be people problems. Establishing cause means dealing personally and directly with people. One of the difficulties with people problems is obtaining accurate information. You may have trouble finding the cause because people don't trust one another well enough to share candid information about what is happening. If you are having trouble locating the problem, ask yourself this question: "Are we honest enough with ourselves and each other to talk openly about the personal problems we sense to be a part of the dilemma?"

5. Diagnosis must be a continued, ongoing process. Suppose you sort out the church school mess and discover that one of the many problems which goes to make up the mess

is the lack of an ongoing effective system of teacher training. You then try a teacher-training event and it falls flat on its face. *Don't* abandon working to solve the problem of poor teacher training. *Don't* resort to putting all your energy into a frantic search for sure-fire teacher training methods. *Do diagnose why* your teacher-training event failed. What was your standard for success? Where precisely did you fall short? What do you believe to be the causes for its failure?

Effective diagnosis begins when you learn how to learn about your mistakes.

JAMES D. ANDERSON

Harmless Drugs

MOST BOOKSTORES have a number of small pamphlets and eye-catching paperbacks bearing titles such as *How to Keep Fit, Ten Rules for Health,* or *Meditation and Relaxation.* All of these can be useful if you are already reasonably healthy. None will cure serious disease.

In the same way there are a number of methods for improving the health of a parish, and this chapter focuses upon experiences that have real value in themselves though they are not answers to serious problems. These are what we might call harmless remedies.

The symptoms that call for a consideration of harmless remedies may be a feeling of boredom with parish life generally, or complaints of the interminable meetings, or the same old round of parish activities. If diagnosis confirms a simple malaise, then read through these suggested activities.

PARISH CONFERENCE

The parish retreat takes many forms and offers great rewards. Whether it is a full-blown Friday supper, a Sun-

day lunch, a weekend at a conference center in the country, or a modest Saturday 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. parish meeting a block away from the church, an off-site get-together really helps people get to know one another better and have a better sense of "who we are at St. So-and-So's."

Let us look at the weekend retreat first. Camp or conference centers are much in use these days, so if you want your parish group to go to one of them, you will have to inquire well ahead of time. Sometimes three months' notice is not enough at popular places. Your diocesan or regional church offices have lists of conference centers and can advise about what kind of setting each has, what kind of program is possible there, how many people you can take, travel directions, and so on. They may do the booking for you or give you the name and telephone of the director of the center. If you make your arrangements personally over the telephone, it is advisable to follow up with a letter outlining what you believe you agreed upon. Then there is less chance of misunderstanding and annoyance on either side.

The retreat in the country has many advantages. The natural surroundings offer opportunities for twos and threes to walk and talk, and this may be as much needed by old-timers who haven't seen each other outside of meetings for months, as by the newer people who just need to know a few people at church. And one of the real pluses is the chance it gives for rector and people to get to know each other away from the formality of Sunday or the busyness of vestry and committees.

The planning for a parish retreat begins long before you arrive on the site. This can be done by a small committee together with their clergyman. There are three simple

planning steps that include many small but essential details. The three planning questions are:

"*Who* is it for?"

"*What* do we want to accomplish?"

"*How* shall we do it?"

The committee members must define the group they want to plan for, then work at the second step until they can write a simple statement of purpose that everyone feels comfortable with, and, finally, address the *how*. It is tempting to rush into suggestions for *how* we can spend our time, instead of first tackling the *who* and *what* questions. Many church conferences become frustrating to the planners, and this frustration in turn is passed on to the participants, because steps 1 and 2 were not really worked through. So steps 1 and 2 are *one* and *two!* Then, under step 3, a little imagination is needed. Suppose your purpose statement reads something like this: "To help the people of our congregation to know each other better and to deepen their appreciation of being members one of another in Christ." How can you accomplish this purpose? What are the elements that need to be present if such a goal is to be realized? Such a list as this might be compiled:

Planned ways of getting to know each other better.

Informal, unhurried periods for people to talk to each other.

Way of examining together the biblical concept of "members one of another in Christ."

Informal worship experience.

Fun—utilizing the outdoors as much as possible.

Already these elements begin to suggest a way of blocking out the time. This might be a tentative schedule, and a possible *how* for the above purpose statement:

FRIDAY   6:30 P.M.   Supper. (Mealtimes are usually fixed by the conference center, so be certain to find out what they are.)

                 8:00 P.M.   1st Session. Welcome, introductions, housekeeping details like the geography of the center, rooms where the sessions will take place, the schedule. Check to see if people are comfortably settled in. (Remember, people will probably be tired, so don't plan a long session on Friday, and do tell everyone how long you intend to meet as a total group —and *end on time*.) Statement of the purpose of the weekend (have it written up). Check on the expectations of participants. Structure some "conversations," in pairs and small groups, to help people get to know each other, and form groups for discussion purposes during the weekend.
                      to
                 9:30 P.M.

SATURDAY   8:30 A.M.   Breakfast.

                 9:30 A.M.   2nd Session. Explore theme of "members one of another." Expand discussion in small groups.

               10:30 A.M.   Break. Coffee, cokes, a breather outdoors.

               11:00 A.M.   3rd Session. A walk *in silence* to experience our surroundings and each other. Back to discussion in
                   to
             12:00 noon

small groups to share how we felt about the experience.

SATURDAY   12:30 P.M.   Lunch.
Free time.
Planned recreation.
Midafternoon rendezvous for coffee, tea, cokes, for those who would like it.

6:30 P.M.   Supper.

8:00 P.M.   4th Session. Some way of working on the theme in small groups, *e.g.,* collages followed by sharing of these.

9:00 P.M.   Planned singing—hymns, folk songs, old songs, spirituals, rounds, campfire songs, etc. Encourage people to bring an instrument they can play. If this can be held around a fireplace with logs burning and lights dimmed, so much the better.

SUNDAY   9:00 A.M.   Breakfast.

10:30 A.M.   Prepare for worship. This is a gathering up of the weekend, a kind of reflection on the theme. Groups build parts of the service. If it is to be the eucharist, for example, one group could make up the intercessory prayers, another choose the Epistle and Gospel (using Prayer Book, Bible, poetry, newspapers as resources), another arrange and decorate the worship area (workroom, chapel, outdoor place, etc.), another

work on the music—guitar or unaccompanied voices, for example—writing up words on newsprint so everyone can see if hymn books are not available.

11:00 A.M.   Worship. This is an opportunity for lay people to take a greater part than usual in the service, yet still be congruent with their tradition, the weekend's purpose and setting, and the momentum of the experience and its level of life together.

11:45 A.M.   Free time.

12:30 P.M.   Lunch.
Finis. People are free to leave or stay awhile to enjoy the country.

This could be a significant experience, and while it is not very avant garde, neither is it something that would just "happen" without thought and effort. But it is possible to plan for such an experience, and it may be just what the parish needs right now.

A much shorter but nonetheless valuable retreat can be a Saturday from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M., which includes lunch; or a Sunday afternoon following the morning service, beginning with brunch. Being away from the parish is an important ingredient, but the retreat need not be far away. Taking everyone to another church up the road for the annual meetings can give a broader perspective than just staying in "our own basement." The Christian education committee, or any other committee, will feel different about their task and each other if all go out to eat together occasionally before their meetings.

Here is an example of a short session for a committee which has been hard at work for several months and has hit a period of self-doubt: "What have we really done?" "Nothing seems to have happened." "I'm lost." "I don't know where we are." Why not take some time to look at what has been accomplished over this period instead of wallowing in the problems. Ask each of the members to contribute to a picture of the positive results of the committee's work.

A variation on this for much larger groups, such as the annual meeting, has much the same ingredients. One clergyman introduced the meetings by asking each of the assembled members of the congregation to write down what he felt the church had accomplished over the past six months. He then invited them to gather in groups around the room, put the accomplishments up on newsprint, and discuss them briefly. Then there was a general sharing. For many this was not only informative, but gave them a place to stand to view their life together, with all its confusions and problems, in a new light.

A short retreat needs to be planned as carefully as a longer one. Arranging a meal and then hoping something will happen means just that—something happens, but it may or may not be satisfying to the participants. But "time out" is a need which surfaces from time to time and should be taken seriously.

VARIETY

Does it feel like the same old round of activities in the parish? A simple strategy emphasizing more variety in subject, structure, and format can cheer up those of us who are old-timers and also intrigue new parishioners. Perhaps

we've become dissatisfied with the activities we started at the beginning of the year, and yet we haven't lately come up with any ideas that really excite us. Or perhaps we have been working very hard on strengthening the work of the leadership group, working on our goals and objectives, and now we are ready for some relief from the long-term task. So look for outside resources as well as the unused talents of parishioners, and try some new educational experiences.

In Parish A, one of the parishioners has experienced a workshop on the clarification of values—a program based on the book, *Values and Teaching* by Raths, Harmin and Simon (Charles E. Merrill, 1966). She is enthusiastic about it and the Christian education committee members feel it would meet a need for many adults. They decide to sponsor two experiences in this area, and are willing to pay for outside leadership of a high quality.

The first experience is to be an introduction to the idea of clarifying one's own values. A short session of sorting out value statements will be included to provide a glimpse of what can be learned through this process. The second experience sponsored by the Christian education committee would be a weekend workshop with specific goals for participants of increased awareness of the values they hold. One important step would be to identify the discrepancies between stated values—the values we say we hold—and operational values—the values we actually live by. The education committee decides to invite a competent person in this field to lead the two workshops, and charge a small fee to the participants to help defray costs. The committee member who had experienced the values workshop was asked to negotiate with the "expert" and to get a clear

understanding of what he or she would do and what might be the expected outcomes. Descriptive publicity would then be distributed. Obviously, this kind of program is not for everyone, and there need be no pressure to attend, as if it were a total parish function. It is, rather, an offering for those who would like it—valuable but not a congregational "must."

Parish B finds in its assistant clergyman an ardent and accomplished exponent of Teilhard de Chardin. He is now in the third year of a related series of lectures and discussions and attracts many people from his own and other parishes. Many find it refreshing to have a structured lecture-type program when the lecturer is committed to his subject and really knows it.

Parish C offers a career-assessment workshop using an outside career specialist as leader. This is for adults, men and women, and is designed to help them identify their skills and to focus on their potential usefulness in a job, full-time or part-time, paid or unpaid. The rector is a part of this, along with three couples, several single adults, and a fifteen-year-old. This offering is spread over four Sunday afternoons following church services.

Parish D offers a whole *smorgasbord* of courses during Lent (and it doesn't *have* to be in this overworked period). For six Wednesday evenings in the parish house library there is a Bible study group; in the fifth-grade classroom an exploration of what it means to be a woman; in the large hall an experimental worship using dance, music, and art, and preparing for lay-planned liturgies for each night of Holy Week. Nearly seventy people are involved in the

courses, and the life of the congregation is enriched considerably during this time.

Parish E invited its church neighbors to share an experience. From the program "Recreation in the Parks," the church recruited a group of professional musicians, who played soul, spiritual, and rock music during the Sunday morning worship. Members and pastors from three other congregations in the community attended. The result was a heightened sense of occasion, an increase in congregational pride in having been innovative enough to think of the program and get the musicians, an increase in family feeling as parishioners played host to the other church folk, and an enlarged sense of the Church as the visitors contributed their presence and interest.

A part of the variety of offerings in any congregation should be occasions whose purpose is having some fun. Beer and pretzels at the Joneses' is a simple and friendly way for newcomers and old members alike to get to know each other. The program is simply that. Another possibility along similar lines is a parish gathering at the country home of a parish member. If that doesn't appeal, the church dance is a way for the parish to dress up, go out on the town to the parish house, and dance.

And, if you've never heard of a Sadie Hawkins dance, this is how it goes. The women invite the men. Everyone assembles in the parish house at a given hour and the women give these instructions: "Men, you are to be looked over, pursued, and caught by the women, to be their partners for the dance. You will be given a sporting chance to get away. After a few minutes' inspection, we will open

the doors and you may escape. If you can maintain your freedom, the limits being the church grounds, for fifteen minutes, you will have the privilege of choosing your own partner from any of the women who did not catch their man." Kid stuff? Ridiculous? Yes, but providing the kind of festive romp which everyone needs from time to time.

INFORMAL WORSHIP

Is worship becoming dull and routine? Changing the whole shape of Sunday morning worship is a large undertaking, certainly requiring careful thought and planning on a parish-wide basis. But worship in informal settings is possible at any time. House liturgies, worship in the basement, the loft, the old garage, the room where the committee works, almost always results in a greater sense of closeness, and can even be a great spiritual experience. Away from the formal church setting and from the usual Sunday formality, lay people can have the experience of putting together a worship service which they feel right about. And it doesn't have to be very avant garde. The place will provide the newness and a way of finding out, again, what the familiar means.

Take the case of St. Clement's, whose worship committee decides, as part of their looking at the worship of the whole congregation, to worship together in the room where they usually meet and then talk about the experience. They choose not to invent a new service, but to use a familiar form of evening prayer, including a time for silent meditation. In the reflections that follow there is a sharing of how much the familiar means—the words, the form, the rhythm—and how close they feel to one another. It has

been a means of sharing on a very personal level, and also of deepening the participants' own understanding of the ritual.

St. John's decides to have several celebrations of the liturgy in homes of parishioners during Lent. The hosts are asked to provide a table, a plate and cup, a loaf of bread, and a bottle of wine. This is a small group, five people. The lay person leading the evening suggests they spend the first forty-five minutes talking about what has been significant for them in their church life recently.

After a moment's thought, one person says: "I guess I've been so busy with the annual fund drive that I'm kind of excited and hopeful, but tired." Another says: "I've really felt out of things lately. We've been having such problems in our family." Yet another says: "I immediately thought of a great moment in the worship last week." And all re member and laugh about a funny moment at the parish picnic. Then the clergyman explains what is going to hap pen in the house Communion. The central act is familiar: giving of thanks; taking bread, breaking and distributing it; taking wine, blessing and distributing it; a reading from the Gospels; and a time for praying for ourselves as well as for others, especially offering the concerns we talked about earlier. That is all. The larger ritual of Sunday morn ing has been reduced to its essentials so that the five may get closer to the experience and to one another.

St. Monica's youth group decides to try different forms of worship as part of their on-going program. The mem bers include services focused on silence and extemporary prayer. One service is the ancient form of compline, tradi-

tionally a service of light at the close of the day. Another includes a Gospel in dance, and intercessions in the form of a collage depicting the needs of the world. They talked about each service at its close, asking the questions: "What was the high point of the service for you?" "Where was it difficult for you?" "What was the main image of God in man in this service?" and "At what point did you have the greatest sense of God's presence?"

Sunday morning cannot be the time for these kinds of explorations. The service then must encompass everyone. But it can be informed and enriched by informal worship experienced in many places by different segments of the congregation.

LET'S CELEBRATE!

If the liturgy is the work of the people, it is also the joyous celebration of the life of the people, lifting up what is human and recognizing its spiritual dimension. Jesus said, "I came that they might have life and have it more abundantly." The parish whose life has become dull and dry might pay attention to the way in which it celebrates both solemn and silly events and seasons. In medieval England, when the church and state were one and the same, the church took the lead in calling the people to celebrate, from the solemn Holy Week liturgies and vigils to the wild and ridiculous April Fools' Day frolics. The church promoted "holy days," the forerunners of holidays in England and vacations in the United States. Nowadays there are many distinctive levels of celebration —national, state, neighborhood, as well as specifically

Christian celebrations such as Christmas and Easter. Each person has events to celebrate: birthdays, graduations, triumphs, and sorrows.

The parish has a unique opportunity to gather up the life cycle of the individual in the celebration of the life of its people, both in the events of the Christian year and on specific local and national occasions. Of course, in a very real sense, every single liturgy is the total celebration of man's creation and redemption through Jesus Christ. But, being human, we find it impossible to encompass the total reality, and so we need to focus first on this and then on that within the context of the whole. And we are not talking about creative worship, a kind of innovation for innovation's sake, but rather a look in depth at familiar human experience. As Bernstein's Mass begins, "We sing a simple song." But the simplicity is one of depth, hard to comprehend. So let us look at some examples of focusing on this and that.

Within the great themes of life and death and resurrection there are the obvious liturgical celebrations of the birth of Christ at Christmas and the death and resurrection of Christ at Easter. But one congregation celebrates a baptism by gathering together around the font and witnessing the new baby born into Christ, lifted high in the hands of the clergyman so that all may receive the new member into the church. Then all are invited to spend a few moments in silence, considering their own membership in Christ. All then file past the font to re-affirm their baptismal vows and receive again on their foreheads a tracing of the cross which they received in their own baptism. The name of the new member and his or her sponsors are written in the register, that humble symbol of the parish family. "Wade

in the waters," they sing and pass the peace, as many as possible with the natural parents and the godparents, at the same time giving their good wishes to the child. The baby is an occasion of celebration and a way of catching up the life of everyone there. All are, in some sense, born again, and understand whence they have come. All experience joy and hope in a new life. The people have witnessed baptisms before but each baptism is, in a very real way, new.

This is one important element in most celebrations. At the center is something simple, old, and eternally true; and quite often there is a traditional way of showing forth this truth. Birthdays are ordinary, everyone has one every year, but for each of us it is a mark of the passing of our time and a deep reminder of the miracle of our own creation—that we were once held high, figuratively speaking, so the world could witness a new member. And so there are some traditional ways of celebrating birthdays, varying from country to country. For us they are the birthday cake and candles, one for each year (and how important it is to ask children how old they are; and *not* to ask people of uncertain age how old *they* are; and again, how important to ask the elderly how old they are), the giving of gifts, and the special treatment for the birthday boy or girl.

Celebrating the parish birthday has some of the same elements though there are not such universal, traditional ways of celebrating. One parish follows the human example and has a cake and a party and a festal service. Another takes the opportunity to recount the beginnings of the parish, to say in effect, "We were born, and this is where we've come. This day marks the passing of our lifetime together." Some members recall the old days and the turning points in the history of the parish. There are skits about

our life today, and we laugh at ourselves a little and drink our health together in whatever is appropriate! Another parish includes in its worship a procession around the grounds and through the parish house, with stops at significant places where prayers are said, thanksgiving and penitence offered for the past, hope and strength asked for the future. Returning to the church, each person has a chance to write down, on a card provided, a personal commitment to the life of this church, and the cards are offered along with the gifts of money.

In these days of mobility, the parish family has many comings and goings, not only among its lay members but among its clergy, too. The way we celebrate the coming and going of our clerical leadership has a lot to do with our future relationship with each clergyman. Remember, celebrations are both solemn and joyful. There are always tears on joyful occasions and hope and renewal in sad and solemn occasions.

One congregation had to say goodbye to the only clergyman they had known. He had started the parish as a small mission and had been with it through the first few years of establishment. Many had been close to him and those who had not were experiencing the effects of his departure in varying degrees. A small worship committee responsible for designing the liturgy for several Sundays identified the grief, confusion, and questioning the people were experiencing and sought to help the congregation celebrate the past leadership of its clergyman, and to let go of that past and look forward to the new leader, whoever he might be.

At the time of the offertory, the congregation was invited to write down on cards provided a memory of their rector, a significant moment in which he had touched their lives, and then to write down the feeling they had

when they heard he was leaving. The purpose of this action was explained for guests and visitors, and they were invited to participate in a general way by thinking of anyone in their lives who had had to leave them—a child leaving home for school, a son or daughter marrying, a friend going to live elsewhere. People were asked not to sign the cards, which were to be collected and read aloud by members of the committee. If someone did not wish his card to be read, he would fold it over and offer it with the rest.

The congregation was invited to go out to the narthex and stand together in a circle. The readings were touching, appreciative, and funny. Then the cards were burned accompanied by prayers that God would accept their thankfulness for the past relationship, help them to let it go and turn toward the future and new relationships. Then the congregation returned to the church to dedicate itself to the next phase of its life.

This description points out that there are occasions for which a celebration must be arranged; not all occasions have traditional rituals and ceremonies. The welcoming of a new clergyman does have the ancient installation service to call upon, either to perform as written or, as one congregation chose to do, to borrow from in preparing a welcome. In this congregation, the central idea of welcome and installation of a new leader was extended to a mutual commitment in the form of a dialogue written for the occasion by lay people and the clergymen. The dialogue was read aloud at the church door, and then the new rector was presented with the traditional Bible, prayer book, and altar vessels. All entered the church, symbolically committed as lay people and clergy to their new task.

Sometimes a congregation can celebrate particular groups in its parish family. There might be a special day for children, young people, parents, single people, men, women, or elderly people. Any such day would provide opportunities for traditional rites and ceremonies and newly thought-out celebrations. In one parish a series of "this is your life" occasions was staged. A surprising number of people were gathered to honor the person chosen. For older people, a celebration of this kind can help affirm their past and make sense of their present.

One congregation was robbed. Gifts to the parish and things that had been worked hard for were destroyed. There seemed no way to express anger and disappointment in ritual form and at the same time to realize that the lost and broken possessions were not the things that mattered most—the walls of the city could still be rebuilt.

There are many ways of celebrating. Some of the possible ingredients are: (a) a central focus, be it ritual, worship, or ceremony, to act out the significance of the occasion; (b) use of movement, drama or dance to heighten the sense of occasion; (c) the sharing of food and drink appropriate to the occasion; (d) a house cleaned and decorated for the celebration; (e) a chance to dress up or laugh at ourselves, with skits, songs, and party pieces; (f) the right setting—indoors, outdoors, the church, the parish house, someone's home, a smart restaurant, Joe's Diner!

Some of the greatest celebrations are those that come out of the life of a group simply because someone sensed the occasion. In other words, celebrating is often something you have to look for.

J.M.H.

CHAPTER
7

Prescription Drugs

ALMOST EVERYTHING having to do with the medical profession has an air of mystery about it. Medicine is just too technical a field for most of us laymen. We feel pretty dependent upon the wisdom of the professionals—the doctors and scientists. Occasionally, however, a layman takes it upon himself to learn more than the rest of us about his own physical ailments. Such a person might become knowledgeable enough to collaborate with the doctor in his own treatment.

It's hard to think of treating church problems as technical. Each of us has his favorite potion and remedy for what's wrong in church life. There's a good deal more folk wisdom and a lot less technical knowledge and professionalism than there is in medicine.

During the past decade, however, human relations and organizational life have become the subjects of serious study. Both secular and religious institutions are making use of consultants and analysts, the contemporary "doctors" of organizations. They have accumulated insights and techniques which interested church leaders can use. We are calling these insights and techniques "prescription

drugs" to indicate that they must be used with care. Here are some questions which might help you decide whether to use these techniques:

a) *Diagnosis:* Do we understand what the problem is?
b) *Prescription:* Does the technique fit the problem?
c) *Dosage:* Can we administer the technique properly?

If you're uncertain about the answers to these questions, it might be wise to call in a consultant.

Following are six techniques you might prescribe for your organization. Some of them may already be in use; others may seem new. Each section will include some ideas about how each can be appropriately used. You will have to decide what will work best for your particular situation.

DATA GATHERING

Data gathering means finding out what you don't know. There are two basic approaches to it: informal and formal. Informal data gathering includes personal observation and memory, conversations with others (informal interviews), and analyzing church records. Formal data gathering consists of methods like formal interviews, questionnaires, and group or congregational meetings for data gathering purposes. The distinction between formal and informal is important because it affects the level of expectation in the people from whom the data is collected. The more formal the method, the higher expectations for results will be raised. On some occasions, you will want people to be excited and expectant because something new might happen. At other times, you may simply want to find out what's on people's minds without raising hopes for change. The

two methods are frequently used together: testing the climate by informal methods first, and then making a major, formal effort in order to get people involved and interested.

The kinds of questions that are asked are very important. The more specific the question, the deeper and more specific the answer will be. Sometimes you will simply want to get a general picture of what people are thinking (e.g., "What are the most and least helpful factors in parish life at the moment?"). At other times, you will want to probe for deeper understanding about something quite specific (e.g., "What results do you hope for from this educational course?"). Frequently, general questions lead to more specific ones. Answers to general questions often uncover areas which you want to probe with more specific questions.

Every question is based on a clue that there is some interesting data to be found. It is important to ask yourself what that clue is and be aware of it. Sometimes, you can actually develop a theory or hypothesis about what the problem is and use data gathering to test its validity. We do have these hypotheses more often than we think. If we're aware of them, they can be tested. If we're not aware of them, we may unknowingly ask questions that tend to confirm them.

The most fruitful kind of data gathering is that which seeks for deeper understanding of the problems. The most important question is: "Why?" Problems are never as simple as they look, and seem to have deeper problems beneath them. It is easy to arrive at a superficial reading of the problem. The questionnaire often does this, because there is no opportunity to probe more deeply, as in an interview. Sometimes a questionnaire turns out to be a kind

of congregational vote. When that happens, the true intent of data gathering—to seek understanding—has been lost.

Here are examples of different approaches to data gathering used by four congregations. Notice that in each case the method used is appropriate to the size of the problem. Each takes its clue from a problem in congregational life.

Parish A: Nothing seemed to be going right. Membership was falling off; pledges were dropping; enthusiasm lagged. A major parish meeting was called for two consecutive evenings. With the help of a consultant, members were asked to list their satisfactions and dissatisfactions. The people organized this data and chose the areas of concern which they felt needed attention most urgently. Then they signed up for action teams in each of the priority areas.

Parish B: The church was not growing in numbers. Visitors did attend Sunday services from time to time but rarely returned. The congregation had been conscientious about getting names and addresses of visitors. So they decided to interview some of them to find out why they had not returned. The interviewers explained carefully that this was not an effort to get them to return but rather an opportunity for the congregation to learn how it might approach visitors in the future.

Parish C: Like Parish B, this church was also concerned about members. In this case, however, newcomers *began* to get involved in the church and then dropped out. The mission committee wondered to what extent the parish groups were open to receiving new members. They had the names of those on the parish committees, and the church records indicated when members had joined the church. They did some statistical analysis and discovered

that 80 percent of the members of parish committees had joined the church five or more years ago.

Parish D: Several new worship practices had been introduced recently, but there was surprisingly little reaction, pro or con, from the congregation. The worship committee designed a questionnaire to find out why. The committee found that the people thought the changes were no real improvement over what had been done before.

In Parish A the magnitude of the problem called for a comprehensive and major effort to involve the people in launching out in new directions. Therefore, people's expectations were raised intentionally. The questions were broad, and action resulted directly from the data gathering.

Parish B decided to find out why visitors did not become members. And there was no other way to do that than to ask the visitors themselves. As it turned out, the visitors were impressed by the approach of the church and cooperated fully in the interviews. The interviewers found out enough to suggest some changes in the way visitors were welcomed and brought into parish life, as well as some changes in Sunday worship.

The mission committee of Parish C had a clue why new members of the church drifted away. Their statistical survey substantiated that the parish committees were made up mostly of people who had been members of the church for a long time. The next step might have been to gather data from the new members to find out if this was one of the factors in their leaving.

In Parish D the lack of response to changes in worship was surprising. The worship committee expected enthu-

siasm or anger, but not silence. The questionnaire they designed told them that the changes were not as creative as the committee had thought they were. The congregation was open to change but in different directions. The next step for the committee was to collect further information to focus on those different directions.

TEAM BUILDING

Most newly formed groups are anxious to get to work. Frequently, the task seems so important that we forget that a collection of people will have to work together to accomplish it. The way these people work together makes a lot of difference in the quality of the finished product and how the members feel about the experience afterwards. People who have worked with groups a lot know they must pay attention to "group life"—that is, the *way* the members work together—as well as to the task itself.

Because of this, it is important for a new group to spend some time building the team. Before it can tackle the tasks that are set for it, it needs to become an effective working team of people. This often involves getting to know the members of the group better than before, sharing hopes and expectations for the future of the group, learning some skills that will be necessary in carrying out the task, and developing some purposes and goals.

At an initial team-building meeting it may be helpful for members to share some basic information about themselves—perhaps some personal history or something about their current activities and interests. More importantly, they should share their feelings about being in the group and their expectations for it. Here are some questions which might be used at an initial meeting for this purpose:

(1) Why did you join this group? Or, what is it about you that caused you to join?

(2) What are your hopes and fears about this group?

(3) In order for this group to be a success for you, what will have to happen?

(4) What special qualities do you think you can offer to this group?

Such questions call upon members to reveal something of themselves. This builds group trust. At the same time, the questions probe for information which the group needs. One member may have joined the group simply to meet and get to know other people. Another feels deeply about the task and has high expectations for its accomplishment. Another member wants to offer his experience from similar efforts. These factors are highly important to members. They are personal goals which, in addition to the group goal, need fulfillment. When the group knows about these, it can support and use them. When personal goals are unrevealed, they can be a hidden source of conflict.

Team building should not be thought of as something for new groups only. It can be of real value to the established group as well. Every group has a tendency to reach a plateau and needs a push to start climbing again. Members tend to develop rigid ways of acting, which need to be looked at by the group, so that it can loosen up and act more flexibly. Every group needs to pause from time to time to rebuild and deepen the life of the team. The way this is most often handled is an annual overnight conference—although it could be handled simply by setting aside one meeting a year for this purpose. Such a team-building experience could focus on an evaluation of the past year's work. Or it could provide members an

opportunity to get to know one another in a more intimate way. Or perhaps it would seek to uncover and deal with problems that seem to be present in the group. Or it might be an opportunity to celebrate group existence and accomplishments.

Whatever the particular focus, it should be something different—not just an extended period of time to continue what has been going on from meeting to meeting. It needs to be a change of pace, an opportunity for looking at the group in new and imaginative ways. For example, the governing body of a church spends a weekend focusing on the individual members of the group, their histories, their strengths and weaknesses, and what particular contribution they have to offer to the group. As a result, members feel closer to one another and more supported by one another. They learn something about themselves and how each person contributes some special quality to the work of the group.

We have written so far about conferences or meetings set aside for team building in new groups and established groups. There is one other occasion that ought to be looked at. This is the kind of team building that should go on at every meeting. When you think about it, this is the function of the small talk that usually occurs at the beginning of each meeting—saying hello and getting brought up to date on one another. This is an often overlooked process through which a team *re*-forms itself for the present work.

A more deliberate technique that many groups use for team building at each meeting is a discipline of spending the last fifteen minutes evaluating their work. This technique helps the group share some immediate feedback, learn from its successes and mistakes, and grow and

develop from meeting to meeting. Since most groups have such heavy agendas and so much to accomplish, it's always a temptation to omit the fifteen-minute evaluation. But once the group sees that it is increasing its efficiency, it develops quite a commitment to the process.

It is possible to describe some factors which help produce a healthy team. They can be used to test the effectiveness of a task group. Here is a list of five of these factors, followed by an explanation of each:

(1) Speaking Out: I have something special to contribute.
(2) Listening and Responding: Others have something special to contribute, too.
(3) Sharing Leadership: Each of us shares equally the responsibility for moving the group along.
(4) Accomplishing the Task: The work must get done.
(5) Enjoying the Work: Reward for my effort.

Speaking Out—This enables the group to benefit from the uniqueness of each individual member. It means getting things out in the open where the group can deal with them. It implies, first of all, our willingness to make verbal contributions; but more profoundly, it means our willingness to share freely with the group our thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Sometimes these contributions may even be unpopular. Imagine, for example, a group that has been working for two hours trying to reach a decision. Finally, the end is in view; a decision is almost made. But one member bucks up his courage and offers a further reservation. The group is furious but hears him out. He has a good point which modifies the decision. One member of the

group speaks for all when she says to him, "I hated it when you brought that up, but now I'm glad you did. As a result, our decision is stronger."

One dissenting voice often changes or modifies a group decision and enhances it beyond what would otherwise have been possible. Each individual is important and adds something special to the whole. If you have a strong feeling inside of you, chances are the group will benefit by knowing about it and dealing with it. It is communication from everyone which is the lifeblood of any group. Without it, there is nothing to work with. With too little of it, only a few contribute to the results.

Listening and Responding—There's very little value in expressing an opinion if nobody listens. This is one of the hardest things for members of a group to learn: to listen to one another. When we get our own ideas flowing, we become so fascinated with them that we can't listen to others, or else we listen only to those who agree with us. What frequently happens is that we state what seems to us a brilliant thought, only to have the next speaker change the subject. That's called a "plop," an idea thrown out which gets no response at all. Look at the following dialogue, for example:

> MARGE: "I think we ought to paint the church white."
> JOE: "What about painting the pews as well?"
> SUE: "No, I think green would give it more life."
> JOE: "The pews might look good in either color."
> MARGE: "I would get tired of green after awhile."

It's often been said that people can stand being disagreed with; what they can't stand is being ignored. Yet it is extremely hard to listen to someone who brings up some-

thing that appears to be irrelevant or wrong. Our natural tendency is to pretend it didn't happen and go on to something else. Unfortunately, that doesn't seem to work very effectively. The statement hasn't been responded to and remains an unsuccessful effort at communication. The person who made the statement feels cut off. Actually, it is usually far better to deal with the statement directly, even if it means deciding that it was irrelevant or inappropriate. At least that takes the person seriously. More often than not, however, we didn't understand what the person was saying, and his idea can end up being a valuable contribution. A way of thinking about inputs from individuals in a group is that each statement when it is made becomes the property of the whole group. The group must deal with one idea before it moves on to another.

Sharing Leadership—This term is not meant to be an alternative to "designated" leadership, which is the role of the chairman, president, or pastor of the group. Rather it supplements and supports the task of a designated leader by insisting that each group member is equally responsible for moving the group toward its goals. It is not just the designated leader's job to keep things moving, it is every member's job. In this sense, anything that is done is an example of shared leadership. Here are several ways in which members often share in the leadership:

— by throwing out a new idea
— by giving information or asking for it
— by trying to harmonize different ideas
— by clarifying or elaborating or summarizing

Shared leadership is an important concept to stress, because many people want to leave everything up to the

designated leader. This is especially true in groups where the pastor of the church is the leader. A member of one church group remarked, "Whatever the pastor says counts five!" This is asking too much of most leaders (including pastors). Leaders need members to help them lead. And groups need the leadership skills of every member. Since there are many ways of providing leadership, different members can offer different skills. Some may be good at generating ideas. Others may be good at helping each member to be "on board" with the way the group is moving. When each member feels responsible, the group has a vital spirit and a wide variety of resources.

Accomplishing the Task—The task *does* have to be accomplished. A few groups tend to worry so much about *how* they are working together that they forget to get the task done. That's just as bad as worrying about the task so much that we ignore group life.

Enjoying the Work—All of the above principles relate to effective group functioning in getting a task done productively. But it is important to remember that for most people it matters that they enjoyed doing the job. This is particularly true of voluntary associations like the church. Usually people expect a lot of personal reward from membership in a group and need to find that in order to function helpfully. The altruistic goals are not always enough. People need something for themselves as well.

These elements of healthy teamwork may help us diagnose some areas where team building is needed. If we take each one seriously, we can learn to build growing groups progressively more able to accomplish tasks and enjoy working on them.

H. Barry Evans

BUILDING GROUP LIFE

With the number of meetings most people go to in the course of a year, they learn to discern very quickly whether associating with a particular group of people is going to be an invigorating experience or a boring one. We have all been to meetings or discussions where, at the conclusion, the only thing we really felt good about was the fact that it was finally over. And we all know how different this relatively common experience is from those very special times when we came away from a meeting stimulated and thankful for the opportunity of being there.

In one parish there was a study group that managed to keep going for over three months. It never began on time and each session seemed to drag on endlessly. Just to walk in the room where the group was meeting was a depressing experience. Only a few people talked, while the others sat with pained and bored expressions on their faces. Contrast this with a group in the same parish which has a clearly defined agenda and which begins on time and ends promptly at a time agreed upon by all. The leader works at encouraging everyone to participate, and, when there is material to present, it is prepared in advance and presented with imagination and conviction.

There is a wide variety in the quality of life that different groups engender, and it is possible for groups to create an atmosphere that brings people in touch with one another, instead of increasing the separation between them. Effective group development rarely takes place by accident. To use our analogy, when boredom sets in we need to know what prescription to take and how to take it.

There are many factors that contribute to the "spirit" of

a congregation—the liveliness of the worship, the frequency of occasions on which the people gather to tend to their common life, the degree of influence people feel they have, the willingness of people to reach out to one another. But no factor is more important than the opportunity people have to meet in groups small enough to allow for real personal interchange and honesty. The quality of the life of any organization is directly proportional to the quality of life of the small groups within it.

Members of one parish discovered this when they began noting the rather erratic attendance at the Sunday morning adult seminars. The format of the seminars followed a regular pattern: thirty or forty people would assemble each week to hear a prepared presentation, after which they were encouraged to respond or raise questions. Invariably, the same people raised the questions and the same people remained quiet. The people responsible for planning these sessions knew that something was missing, but they had not pushed for a different format because of the plea of a small but vocal group (the talkers), who insisted that "we not waste our time in buzz groups."

A compromise plan was developed that contained a lecture program for those who wanted this (and many quite honestly did), and added two special interest groups—one on values and another on liturgy. These were limited to twelve people and a conscious effort was made to encourage the participation of the members. The large group had demanded little commitment and made it difficult for people to express themselves or to relate to one another in a personal way. By contrast, the small groups asked for a regular weekly commitment from the participants for the scheduled length of time (eight weeks). Great care was taken to introduce people by name and to encourage the

sharing of feelings both positive and negative. People's opinions were taken seriously and their expression encouraged, and a consistent effort was made to state clearly at the beginning of each meeting what the purpose of the gathering was and what they hoped to accomplish. The chairman of the group made his contribution, but was equally concerned to see that everyone's contribution was encouraged and built upon in some manner. The result of all these efforts was a high degree of interest, commitment, and personal satisfaction on the part of the participants.

Unfortunately, it is far too easy to take meetings for granted. Most of us probably participate in more meetings than we care to, both in the parish and in the community at large. Most of these meetings could be much more effective than they normally are if we would take seriously some of the details that spell the difference between a good meeting and a sloppy one. Meetings should start on time and end on time. They should be held in rooms that are well ventilated and comfortable. Chairs should be arranged in such a fashion as to allow for maximum visibility. Let's face it, there's nothing sacred about spending an hour staring at the back of someone's neck.

When the meeting begins, time should be taken to make sure everyone knows everyone else, at least by name. One parish I know of has a tradition of spending the first fifteen minutes of every meeting that goes on in the parish "warming" people up. They are encouraged to share something personal about themselves so that in addition to the business being transacted, they will leave feeling that they have had at least *some* personal exchange with other members of the Christian community. In addition to a "warmup," it is helpful to have the purpose of the meeting clearly stated on the blackboard or newsprint and a proposed

agenda offered, allowing people time to react to what they see and make any changes that might be necessary.

And, of course, if the group is expected to arrive at any specific decisions, a recorder should be appointed to make sure what is said is put down in writing. It is especially helpful when the recorder or secretary takes time to see that the minutes are copied and sent to the participants as soon after the meeting as possible. Old hat, you say? You're right! But think a minute about all the meetings you attend where most of these things are omitted. It is not, generally, that we do not know how to run an effective meeting; it is that we are all too prone to short cut in an effort to minimize the work we have to do.

The secret of building group life lies in developing a climate of trust. When people trust each other enough to say what is on their minds, the chance of boredom is considerably lessened. Jack Gibb, the well-known behavioral scientist, says that there are four issues every group must resolve before any real depth of trust is possible. First is the issue of acceptance. Unless I feel included in a group, welcomed, listened to, and taken seriously, my trust in the group will be limited. Secondly, if I am to trust the group, I need to know something about the people in it—who they are, what they think, and what they feel—and I need for them to know something about me. Thirdly, I need to know what the group is about, what we are up to, and what we expect to accomplish. Finally, I need to know who's in charge and how much leadership I and the other members of the group will be able to exercise.

The development of small-group life is a "prescription drug" in the life of any congregation. Sometimes life-giving groups develop quite spontaneously around common focal points with people who are sufficiently congenial to make

them work. But more often than not, such group development does not take place without leaders who are trained. Knowing how to develop such trained leadership is the mark of a healthy congregation.

RENEWING LEADERSHIP

Any institution that is to remain healthy and creative must give high priority to the support and development of its leadership. In the church this is especially true. On the one hand there is a professional staff, varying in size from congregation to congregation, whose effectiveness depends on their ability to keep abreast not only of new developments in the cultural and theological spheres, but also of the developments in technology and communication that are directly related to the way in which the church carries out its mission. And on the other hand, there are the volunteers who make up the parish membership. They must be supported in their ministry, trained to do the kind of jobs that need to be done, and stimulated to grow and mature as people of faith. Although there are times when lay and professional leaders need to be trained together so that each can hear from the other, there are also times when their different functions demand a different kind of response.

Professional Leadership. As many congregations have discovered—sometimes to their joy and sometimes to their despair—nothing much of significance will go on very long without the support of the designated leadership, especially the clergyman in charge. The clergyman, whether he wants to or not, is in reality the central figure in the life of every congregation. He can develop methods by which his leader-

ship is effectively shared or he can keep the leadership very much to himself, limiting the decision-making process to a very few close associates. He can initiate programs either directly or indirectly, or he can quietly quash ideas by his lack of interest and support. As unfair as this might seem, it is a fact that needs to be reckoned with, not only by the clergyman himself, but by all others in the congregation who care about what is going on.

In the life of every congregation, however well organized, the role of the clergyman is central. This cannot be emphasized too strongly; but having made this point, there is a corollary that must also be noted. No clergyman can operate effectively without the support of a group of people who share some of his hopes and dreams and are willing to help carry them out. The absolute necessity of this kind of support group has been borne out by numerous clergymen who have been given leave by their congregations to go off to conference centers or seminary campuses for programs of personal renewal and continuing education. In most cases these programs have been tremendously effective—maybe even too effective—for they have pulled men out of their working situations and sent them back "turned on," brimming with new ideas to share with a congregation which has not been involved in the same experience. In all too many instances the resulting impact of "turned-on" clergymen and unprepared congregations has resulted in a standstill, and the momentum is entirely lost. The decision of many clergy to leave the parish ministry has been prompted by just this problem of re-entry. It is crucial, therefore, that when a congregation begins to concern itself with renewal, it pay serious attention to the renewal of its leadership in such a way that connec-

tions are made which allow for sharing mutual stimulation, honest criticism, and support.

Currently, there are numerous opportunities for the renewal and strengthening of the parish ministry. Some have been going on for some time and have developed a high degree of sophistication, offering everything from theological refresher courses to intensive personal therapy. The more established centers for continuing education include such places as the Institute for Advanced Pastoral Studies, in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan; the College of Preachers in Washington; and the special programs of such seminaries as Hartford and Yale in Connecticut and the Virginia Theological Seminary in Virginia, to name but a few. Some time ago the need to train clergymen more effectively in counseling skills resulted in the development of the Council for Clinical Training, which now, along with numerous related organizations, offers a variety of programs for the training of persons in the psychological fields. And in recent years this emphasis has broadened as organizations have grown up both within and without the church that offer a variety of training opportunities in the behavioral sciences. The opportunities for a clergyman to learn skills in consultation, designing educational events, planning, and effective organizational management are numerous. A postcard to the Association of Religion and the Applied Behavioral Sciences (c/o The Reverend William A. Yon, 521 N. 20th St., Birmingham, Alabama 35203) would provide descriptions of enough training events to keep a man or woman occupied for several years. The point is that the renewal of professional leadership needs to be a high-priority item in the life of every parish. It is the key to the quality of that church's life.

Many clergymen are notoriously poor managers of the institutional side of congregational life, a concern still not dealt with in most seminary curricula. They are often strong pastoral counselors, educators, or preachers, but are weak when it comes to bringing all the parts of an institution together in a manner that insures maximum effectiveness and participation. Some clergymen have dealt with this problem by making use of lay administrators. Others have taken special university-sponsored courses in parish management. And in recent years, training programs in organizational development are being made available in a variety of forms. One especially creative venture is the organizational development program sponsored jointly by the Mid-Atlantic Training Committee of Washington, D.C. (a church-sponsored body) and the Center for a Voluntary Society, an affiliate of the National Training Laboratories. The professional leaders of the church can be better managers, but unfortunately, up to the present time, it has been a rare clergyman indeed who has made use of such help. There are undoubtedly many reasons for this— lack of funds, lack of support from the governing bodies of the local congregation, or simply lack of pressure to change. Whatever the reasons, the refusal to view the renewal of leadership as an issue of crucial importance produces a situation in which everyone loses.

One parish felt so strongly about this issue that it appointed a group of parishioners to meet regularly with the clergy (generally with outside help) to assist their professional leaders in planning a program for developing their own skills. The planning included such considerations as selecting areas of specialization, annual conference participation and advanced study, and a clearly thought-out sabbatical after a designated period of service. The point of this

group was to give help and direction to the professional leadership of the parish and insure that what was happening to the clergyman was having some impact on at least a segment of the parish at large.

Lay Leadership. Quite obviously, no parish can long survive with professional leadership alone. The people—clergy and laity alike—are the church, and the quality of life in any given congregation will depend not only on the faith and commitment of its membership, but in the way its leaders are recruited, trained to do what is asked of them, and supported while they are doing it.

An effective program of leadership development is a prescription that cannot help but improve health. Such a program might include some of the following areas of concern:

1) The selection of certain lay leaders for special training in the skills necessary for effective leadership development. Such training generally involves going away for periods of time throughout the year, unless a congregation already has available persons who can share such skills in the parish.

2) Annual workshops, either in the parish or on a regional basis, to train committee members and committee chairmen for maximum effectiveness.

3) Continuing opportunities (such as sermon dialogues, weekend conferences) for people to grapple with their understanding of what they and the church they belong to are about. One parish divided its membership according to occupational groupings in order to enable persons to deal regularly with the implications of their faith for the work they did and the kinds

of decisions that they made in the community at large. These groups found themselves dealing with everything from business ethics to issues of marriage and family life.

Effective leaders do not necessarily produce committed Christians, but the development of a community of committed Christians cannot continue long without trained leadership. When we have a message of crucial importance to proclaim, there is no excuse for not proclaiming it with all the wisdom and skill we have at our disposal.

JAMES C. FENHAGEN

OUTSIDE RESOURCES

This section deals with resource people who are specialists in particular areas. They could be any kind of specialists, from guest preachers to experts in the use of audiovisuals. Every congregation uses resource people, and they should probably be used a lot more than they are.

Resource people usually serve two functions for a congregation. They provide it with information that is not readily available (e.g., the use of audiovisuals). Or they provide it with a new experience designed to broaden its perspective (e.g., the guest preacher shows a new way of looking at the Gospel).

The use of resource people for one of these purposes is a healthy thing for a congregation. It means that a congregation is important enough to receive specialized assistance. It is a recognition that the congregation does not have all the necessary resources within itself, and it is a safeguard against rigidity and narrowness.

Here are some examples of the way resource people were used by several congregations:

Parish X: Folk masses are held monthly at the main service, and the church has its own folk group to lead the music. Nevertheless, two or three times a year musicians from outside the congregation are invited to lead the music. The parish folk group rehearses with the visitors and serves as a back-up for the service. This opens up new possibilities for the congregation—in terms of both its repertoire and its style of singing. The folk group learns new songs and new techniques for leading congregational singing.

Parish Y: Children were bored with worship which seemed to communicate only on the adult level. Yet the congregation was committed to having them present at the service. It discovered two resource people from the performing arts: a puppeteer and a choreographer. The puppeteer helped act out and interpret the Scripture readings. The choreographer worked with children and adults in dramatizing and dancing. The children now enjoy the experience, and the adults feel they are more involved and are learning more than before.

Parish Z: The women's group had practically dissolved when it decided to try to relaunch in a new direction. Those remaining in the group got other women in the congregation to attend a workshop on the role of women in the church. Later, the leader of the workshop was brought in to act as a resource consultant to the group. The leader was able to stimulate their vision and focus their goals in order to attract new members and engage in productive and fulfilling tasks.

H.B.E.

PLANNING TECHNIQUES

There is a humorous desk piece put out by some enterprising company which looks like this:

PLAN AHEA𝒟

The popularity of this little sign no doubt rests in the fact that it touches most of us where we live, parish churches being no exception. Churches, and for that matter all organizations, would be a lot healthier if they took more seriously the ongoing task of planning what they want to do and where they want to go.

Effective planning takes time and thought, and when entered into seriously is probably as important an educational process as most organizations experience in a lifetime. When people are involved in shaping the goals of an institution to which they belong, they are not only learning about the importance of planning for the institution, but of planning for themselves as well. Thousands of sermons are preached on the necessity for taking responsibility for the direction in which one's life is heading. For a Christian institution not to take the planning process seriously is to indicate by its action that the direction our lives take is not important, despite all that we say to the contrary.

One of the most effective instruments for overall parish planning is a design developed by Richard Beckhard entitled *The Confrontation Meeting*, which was printed in the March–April 1967 issue of *The Harvard Business Re-*

view. This design has been adopted by John C. Harris and James Anderson (on the staff of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, D.C.) for use at a general parish meeting. Because the Parish Confrontation Meeting involves taking a hard look at what goes on underneath the surface of parish life, it needs to be implemented by someone outside the parish structure who is skilled in consultation and group process.

The design requires two evenings, or one full day, for completion. First, there is some initial climate-setting, in which goals and procedures for the meeting are clearly outlined, and people are invited to share responsibility for the parish's future and encouraged to be as open and honest as possible. Then the congregation is divided into working groups of about twelve persons, each with a chairman who has been oriented ahead of the meeting. The task of the group is to respond honestly to two questions: "What in the life of this parish gives you the most satisfaction?" and "What limits your level of satisfaction in this parish?" After ample time is given for a response to these questions, the groups report back in total session and the material is divided into categories of concern (worship, education, etc.).

People are then asked to divide again into groups to deal with the areas that interest them most, giving priority to those concerns they are willing to work with and indicating which should be assigned to other groups. These are again reported back in total session, and areas of responsibility are assigned and procedures for follow-up established. The results are generally quite surprising. Concerns surface that have long been hidden. And, of course, the outcome largely depends on how committed the leadership actually is to responding to what they hear.

A variation of the Parish Confrontation Meeting is a planning weekend in which the leadership of the parish is asked to participate (again with an outside consultant). For many parishes, such a planning weekend is an annual event, often run in conjunction with an abbreviated Parish Confrontation Meeting. This is a means of taking the parish temperature and finding out what the general membership is thinking and feeling. Such a weekend allows for the evaluation of what went on during the past year and what the objectives need to be for the year ahead. One parish that uses such a weekend on an annual basis always produces a statement of focus for the coming year, which is then given to the congregation at large for their comment, criticism, and eventual support.

A healthy parish is involved in the planning process at every level of its common life. Educational programs need to be planned, outreach programs need to be constantly evaluated and new objectives set, worship needs to be planned so that the voice of the worshiper becomes part of an ongoing dialogue. There is a constant need for short-range planning and long-range planning. Most of us today are familiar with some form of the planning process. This familiarity is no guarantee, however, that we have made any commitment to the discipline that underlies this process. And this, of course, is the crucial issue. Disciplined planning involves working seriously with each step of the planning process, no matter how minor an outcome is anticipated. It means taking seriously the need to:

1) Find out what is going on, how effective other efforts have been, what it is people both want and need. (Data Collection)
2) Break this information down into workable categories

where the relative importance of the information can be assessed—including, of course, the resources and expectations of the planners themselves. (Data Analysis)

3) State a clear purpose or obligation for where we want to go and what we hope to accomplish in getting there. (Purpose)

4) Develop a plan for getting where we want to go—brain-storming possibilities, assessing resources, testing alternative designs. (Plan)

5) Establish clear procedures as to who does what, and where the responsibility lies; effective procedures should *always* include: a) taking time to get people acquainted, b) stating clearly what the objective is, and c) deciding how long the process will be. (Procedure)

6) Finally (and of critical importance), evaluate and plan. The evaluation of one plan or program initiates the planning process all over again.

The planning process is a prescription drug that can be used in various dosages. It is an all-purpose medicine that is both preventive and curative (like aspirin?). In small doses, a prescription is not required and outside help is not needed, but when undertaken on a large scale, the planning process needs the help of an outside consultant.

                                                                    J.C.F.

Intensive Care

"Those societies which cannot combine reverence to their symbols with freedom of revision must ultimately decay."
—Alfred North Whitehead

THE MOST extensive and intensive help you can receive is to involve yourself in a long-term relationship with a parish development consultant. Here is the way a parish development consultant describes this relationship and the type of help he has to offer.

The consultant writes:

You have asked for help with your parish educational program. You have expressed your concern about offering the best possible Christian education to the children, adults, and youth in the congregation.

You have asked for help by turning to an outside expert who has skills and experience with parish Christian education. It is important, first of all, to clarify the nature of the helping relationship between you and your outside helper or consultant. Perhaps you have had other experiences with professional consultants or "experts" which have led to certain positive or negative expectations.

At any rate, we feel it is extremely important to clarify the type of helping relationship that we would like to establish with you.

In general, parishes which turn to consultants for help fall into one of four categories:

"We are asking for help because:

1. "We would like you to give us the answers to our problems. We expect you to provide us with the best possible plans, procedures, and ideas to resolve our educational dilemmas."

2. "We would like you to do the work for us. We expect you to provide the leadership and expertise necessary to get our educational program back on the right track."

3. "We would like you to investigate our situation and reassure us as to its basic value. We already know that there is nothing basically wrong with what we are doing but it would be useful to have your support and suggestions."

4. "We would like you to work alongside us to help us clearly identify our problems and to take action on them. We expect you to act as a coach, facilitator, and resource person to help us increase our own capacity as a congregation to choose and execute the best courses of action."

This fourth stance is the helping relationship we wish to establish with you. We will work *with* you, not do things *for* you. We will give our personal opinion but not provide answers for you. We will work with you over a period of time to help you increase your own educational skills and insights, instead of giving you one-shot, quick answers to the complexities of your congregational situation.

For these reasons we believe that it is important for you to understand something of the rationale which underlies our working relationship with you.

We believe:

1. That the whole of parish life educates. What happens to people during a group meeting, on Sunday morning at worship or in the coffee hour, serves to communicate and educate as fully as any formal teaching sermon or class situation.

2. That each parish is unique. Blueprints and models produced for other congregations may or may not be useful as applied to the actual environment of your parish. Assisting you to develop methods for surfacing information concerning the questions of the people in your congregation is an essential ingredient of the help we have to offer.

3. That a parish is a complex, dynamic, social organism. A human being does not feel healthy when one small part of him is hurting. The cause of a simple headache can be exceedingly difficult to locate and may arise from one or more highly interrelated sources. Just so with a parish. No change is ever small for any group or person. We are committed to the necessity of working with the total life and experience of the congregation.

4. Progress takes time, hard work, and commitment. If you are looking for a weekend rejuvenation of the mission and vitality of your parish, look elsewhere. At the same time we expect that our work together will lead to an increasing sense of satisfaction, fun, and reward for all concerned. The Gospel is good news, and good news means exciting, stimulating experiences of life. We be-

lieve that these satisfactions can only be attained and retained through a thorough and long-range process.

5. We wish to strengthen the capacity of each and every member of your congregation to choose freely, and with a high degree of commitment, his role and function in the life of the parish. Our help will focus much more on assisting you to establish the conditions and climate which foster free choice among alternatives, and strong commitment to the choice made, than it will on providing program answers.

6. We do *not* see our role as being one-shot evaluators or program developers. The help we are offering is that of assisting you to develop over a long period of time the resources and processes necessary to place you in a position of continual renewal as a congregation. We are seeking an effective parish and staff, capable of accurate self-direction—not the one right course to be taken. No one at this point can predict what turns or courses your parish will take. What we can say is that given the unpredictable, ever-changing nature of the community and congregation, your parish must be a smooth-running ship with a responsive helmsman and capable crew using the best of modern resources in meeting the needs of its people.

Parish development consultation is a process which assists parishes to create this capacity for continued self-renewal by seeking improvement in:

a) The style of leadership and parish management on the part of the clergy and lay leaders.

b) The level of learning and satisfaction the congregation is deriving from their worship, education, and personal experiences in the parish.
c) The capacity of the various parish groups and organizations to provide a faithful Christian experience for their own members; and to plan, execute, and evaluate effective programs for the congregation at large.
d) The processes and structures by which the parish involves new and old members in the parish's task or mission.

Although our pattern of working will vary from parish to parish and can in no case be completely predetermined, we generally work in a series of phases. The time periods are based on a minimum of two man-days of consultation per month.

PHASE I—2 to 4 MONTHS

The identification of problem areas and priorities for renewal. This is done with the rector, vestry, key groups, and the entire congregation. The purpose is to surface the exigencies or demands with which the congregation as a whole is trying to cope.

Activities generally include:

1. Small group meetings and interviews.
2. Self-developed questionnaires.
3. Problem identification and goal-setting conferences.
4. Sessions with the clergy and key lay leaders regarding the perception of their leadership and managerial styles.

PHASE II—4 to 10 MONTHS
Team Development

In this phase the key subgroups and organizational units in the parish are given training and assistance in the actual planning, problem solving, and use of resources within areas of high priority. The purpose is to increase the working effectiveness of the groups and to create better trust, communication, and shared experience of Christian community for these groups.

Activities generally include:

1. Teamwork workshops.
2. Technical assistance and consultation in the participative planning and actual carrying out of strengthened parish programs of worship and education.
3. Training and education in the theology of change, the management of change within the church, skills of problem solving, planning, parish management, and Christian education procedures.
4. Continued counsel with clergy and key leaders on their leadership roles and relationships.
5. Linkage to other resource persons and sources.
6. Development of parish leadership through referral and participation in area training events.

PHASE III—2 to 4 MONTHS
Implementation and Evaluation

This phase is to evaluate the work already done, to rethink the original priorities, and to create a firm base for the preservation of areas of strength and for the achieve-

ment of new opportunities in the future. This phase is also the time to consider the renegotiation of the parish development consultation relationship.

Activities generally include:

1. Diagnosis with the clergy and vestry of the present state of the parish.
2. Planning and evaluation conference, setting new goals for the parish.
3. Procedural consultation on methods of evaluation and long-range planning.
4. Contract renegotiation with Parish Development.

The original parish development consultation relationship is for Phases I, II, and III, lasting from eight to eighteen months. Experience and research have proved that it generally takes from two to three years for lasting change to occur.

Hence, the original relationship or contract can and should be renewed if both the congregation and the parish development committee feel that this initial effort has proven beneficial. The focus of this second eighteen-month cycle is on helping the parish develop its internal resources to the point that the parish can remain adaptive, flexible, and creative in its witness and mission.

Finally, it is important to list *some* of the conditions for success if the process is to be mutually worthwhile.

1. The clergy and vestry are experiencing some genuine pressure for change or improvement.
2. The leadership is willing to take a realistic long-term time perspective.
3. The leadership is willing to face the facts, to do a real

diagnosis of the problems, and to take mutual responsibility for them.

4. Genuine trust and collaboration is possible between clergy and vestry, clergy and consultant, consultant and vestry.

5. It is possible to achieve some tangible, intermediate, or short-term results.

<div style="text-align: right;">J.D.A.</div>

When You Need Outside Help

SOMETIMES WE all need to go to the doctor—when we are well, for a physical checkup to be sure that all is as it seems, and when we are sick, to use the doctor's skill and experience for faster and more complete healing. It is possible to wait too long before going to the doctor, to put off the possible pain and the certain anxiety, hoping the trouble will go away, until finally even the doctor cannot help.

This can also be true for you and your parish. You may find that the remedies in this book are not doing the job, and that the educational maladies of your congregation persist. You may simply desire outside assistance and expertise in taking an intensive look at what is happening educationally in the life of your parish. There are people who can help, and often the best help comes from working directly with a resource person or consultant.

I believe that it is important to be clear about the type of help you can expect to receive from an outside expert. Some of the kinds of help available to you by contracting with an outside resource are:

1. Learn about programs and resources which are proving innovative and useful elsewhere. (Remember, though, that just because it works elsewhere doesn't mean it will work for you.) Such information can stimulate your educational program and serve as a spring-board for your own situation.

2. Provide tailor-made training for you and your leadership in educational skill areas appropriate to your parish situation. Areas of skill training available are:
   — Use of games and simulations.
   — Communications and human relations skills.
   — Curriculum and program planning.
   — Use of creative arts such as modeling, drawing, sculpture, collage.
   — Creative dramatics.
   — Classroom teaching techniques.
   — Creative methods for using the Bible.
   — Skill in perceiving and understanding behavioral and developmental issues with children and youth.
   — The handling of discipline problems.

3. Provide tailor-made educational programs for you and your leadership in areas of conceptual learning appropriate to your parish situation. Some important areas are:
   — Basic Christian theology and apologetics.
   — Understanding the Bible.
   — History of Christian thought.
   — Religion and culture.
   — The structure of the church and Christian mission.

Remember that educational leaders need *both* content and methods. Experience has also proved that education and training provided locally for your leaders is, in the long run, often less expensive and almost always more effective than the more generalized approach of a regional workshop.

4. Act in an enabling role to help you discern with candor and clarity the structural, organizational, and systemic issues which are hampering an effective educational effort by the congregation. For instance, a consultant might help you to surface the real reasons for low teacher morale and then stay with you through the process of trying to solve that problem in ways which generally keep it solved. Or the consultant might help you examine the gap between parental expectations and the reality of church school, assisting you to develop continuing processes for communication and clarification.

How do you find this kind of help and what does it cost? The first rule in fiinding outside help is to ask yourself if you are really clear about the kind of help you need. Experience says that eight times out of ten the kind you will need first is help in getting a firmer grip on your problems, in figuring out what kind of help will really be helpful. Finding the *real* problem is 80 percent of the struggle. Most parish educational dilemmas remain continuing sores because the real problems have never been identified. (See "Finding the Problem" by James D. Anderson in *Colloquy in Christian Education,* edited by John Westerhoff, Pilgrim Press, 1972.)

The second rule in finding help is to be willing to meet in person for one hour with a potential resource person and to put before him or her the problem as you see it. Don't try to do business over the phone. Without such a meeting, don't prejudge the help being offered.

The third rule is to be persistent *and* expectant in the search for assistance. There is far more help available to parishes than is ever utilized or asked for by most congregations. If someone (clergy or lay) tells you the help isn't available, don't stop looking. Ask for yourself, using the first two rules, and I guarantee you will be pleasantly surprised. Some of the first places to look and ask are:

— neighboring parishes, all denominations.
— the diocesan office and/or your bishop.
— the Executive Council at 815 Second Avenue, New York, New York 10017.
— your nearest university or theological seminary.
— regional or ecumenical training centers such as Mid-Atlantic Training Committee, Consultant Trainers Southwest, or urban action training centers.
— private entrepreneurial firms engaged in providing educational technical assistance, organization consultation, or skill training.
— The Association of Religion and Applied Behavioral Science has a list of members qualified to provide training and consultation in many of the areas mentioned.
— check out the names of people you find writing in or being suggested by such magazines as:

Spectrum—I.J.R.E., P.O. Box 303, New York, New York 10027

Colloquy, 1505 Race Street, Philadelphia, Penna. 19102

— Project Test Pattern, Mt. St. Alban, Washington, D.C. 20016, is in touch with a wide range of parish resource people.

— Center for a Voluntary Society, 1507 M Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005, works with a large number of scholars and practitioners who are familiar with the particular problems of volunteer organizations.

Be persistent. The help is there if you can learn how to search and ask.

The fourth rule is: don't let money be a problem. I have a psychotherapist friend who says that he has never in twenty years of practice found money to be a serious obstacle for people who really wanted the help of psychotherapy. He states, "I have always been able to help them find a way." This is true for you. First, find the outside resource people you need and then talk with them about financing the help. They will know sources of funding. If you sincerely wish help, your own excitement and energy will go a long way toward involving the outsider in assisting you to find the funding.

The fifth rule is to establish a clear contract with the resource person. Spend time being as explicit as possible about both administrative arrangements and program outcomes. Spell out, preferably in writing, your mutual goals for the helping relationship. Spend time sharing assumptions and achieving a mutual overview of your work together.
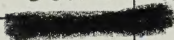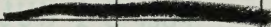
J.D.A.

DATE DUE

APR			
JUN 1 5 1976			
JUN 1 3 1981			
GAYLORD			PRINTED IN U.S.A.